Hamlet Studies

Hamlet Studies

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HAMLET STUDIES

An International Journal of Research on

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Vol. 5 Summer and Winter 1983 Nos. 1 and 2

DAVID IAN RABEY	**Play, Satire, Self-Definition and Individuation in *Hamlet***
CHRISTINE GOMEZ	**Hamlet—An Early Existential Outsider?**
JANET S. HERTZBACH	**Hamlet and the Integrity of Majesty**
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RUSS MCDONALD	**Osric**
R.W. DESAI	**Hamlet's Soliloquies and Shakespeare's Audience**

Notes, *Production Reports*, and *Reviews etc.*, by

GEORGIA B. CHRISTOPHER, ROBERT F. WILLSON JR., WILLEM SCHRICKX, CHARLES HAINES, MARVIN ROSENBERG, BERNICE W. KLIMAN, LARRY S. CHAMPION, HIREN GOHAIN, ROBERT F. FLEISSNER, W. HUTCHINGS, JOSEPH CANDIDO

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Address all correspondence to :

R.W. Desai, "Rangoon Villa,"
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New Delhi 110 008, India

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Contributors to this Issue

JOSEPH CANDIDO, Professor of English at the University of Arkansas, has published articles on Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama in *Philological Quarterly*, *Shakespeare Studies*, and *Cahiers Elisabethains*. He is co-editing a 1000-page annotated bibliography of *Henry V* which will be published by Garland Publishing Company.

LARRY S. CHAMPION, Head of the Department of English at North Carolina State University, is the author of *The Evolution af Shakespeare's Comedy*, *Shakespeare's Tragic Perspective*, *Perspective in Shakespeare's English Histories*, *Ben Jonson's 'Dotages,' Tragic Patterns in Jacobean and Caroline Drama*, and *King Lear: An Annotated Bibliography* (2 vols.).

GEORGIA B. CHRISTOPHER, Associate Professor of English at Emory University, has written articles on Milton that have featured in *PMLA*, *ELH*, *MLQ*, and *N&Q*. Her article "Shakespeare in Virginia" was published in *SQ* (Summer 1982) and, in the same year, her book *Milton and the Science of the Saints* (Princeton Univ. Pr.) won the James Holly Hanford award.

R.W. DESAI'S most recent publications are articles on Webster and Milton which feature in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, Vol. 1, and *Milton Quarterly* (December 1983), respectively.

ROBERT F. FLEISSNER is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio. A paper by him on Falstaff is scheduled for vol. XVI of *Shakespeare Studies*.

HIREN GOHAIN, author of *Tradition and 'Paradise Lost': A Heretical View* (1977), is Professor of English at Gauhati University, Assam.

CHRISTINE GOMEZ, Additional Professor of English at Holy Cross College, Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, has published religious poems in *The New Leader*, a Catholic weekly, and is currently working on a collection of three plays to be published by the Daughters of St. Paul Publications, Bombay.

CHARLES HAINES is Professor of English at Carleton University, Ottawa, and a theatre critic for the CBC. His most recent publication on Shakespeare is "Othello's Unconsummated Marriage" (with T.G.A. Nelson) in *Essays in Criticism* (January 1983).

JANET S. HERTZBACH is under contract to the Garland Press, New York, for the preparation of the 1940s section of an annotated bibliography of *Hamlet* criticism. She is Assistant Professor of English at Gettysburg College.

W. HUTCHINGS writes the annual "Review of Periodical Articles" for *HSt*. His most recent book-length publication is *The Poetry of William Cowper* (Croom Helm, 1983).

BERNICE W. KLIMAN is a frequent contributor to *HSt*. Co-editor of *Shakespeare on Film Newsletter*, she teaches at Nassau Community College of the State University of New York.

RUSS MCDONALD who is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Rochester has published essays on Shakespeare and Jonson in *SQ* and *SEL* respectively, and on the two playwrights together in *Shakespeare Survey*, 34.

DAVID IAN RABEY, Lecturer in English at the University of Dublin, has degrees from the Universities of Birmingham and California (Berkeley). He teaches Shakespeare and Modern Drama. An article by him on David Edgar appeared in *Critical Quarterly* (Autumn 1983).

MARVIN ROSENBERG, Professor of Dramatic Art at the University of California, Berkeley, is on the editorial board of *SQ*.Author of *The Masks of Othello*, *The Masks of King Lear*, and *The Masks of Macbeth*, he is now gathering material for The Masks of Hamlet.

WILLEM SCHRICKX has published articles on Shakespeare and Coleridge. Author of *Shakespeare's Early Contemporaries* (1956) as well as several articles that have appeared in *Shakespeare Survey*, Prof. Dr. Schrickx is Director of the English and American Literature Seminar at the University of Rijks.

J.J.M. TOBIN'S name is well known to readers of this journal. Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, he has published articles in *N&Q*, *AN&Q*, and *Archiv*.

ROBERT F. WILLSON, JR. is Professor of English and Chairman at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. His published work includes articles and notes in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Shakespeare Studies*, and *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*. His note on " 'Sullied' Or 'Solid' " appeared in *HSt*, vol. 4.

Comments and Announcements

Authors of articles on *Hamlet* that have appeared in other journals are invited to send offprints of their articles to W. Hutchings, Department of English, The University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, England. Professor Hutchings writes the annual "Review of Periodical Articles" and any offprints he receives will render this undertaking less exacting to that extent.

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Play, Satire, Self-Definition and Individuation in *Hamlet*

DAVID IAN RABEY

Hamlet's comments on the black clothes which set him apart from the surrounding court world led G. Wilson Knight to describe his situation and import as those of "the ambassador of death walking amid life."[1] It is true that the initial court scene has little of the almost tactile atmosphere of sin, corruption and decadence of many Jacobean tragedies, most notably *The Revenger's Tragedy*; but then Hamlet may be a less convincing candidate for election to the office of "ambassador of death" than Vindice. Rather, his speech to Gertrude makes an issue out of *not* telling her or us what Hamlet is:

> 'Tis *not* alone my inky cloak, good mother,
> *Nor* customary suits of solemn black,
> *Nor* windy suspiration of forced breath,
> *No*, *nor* the fruitful river in the eye,
> *Nor* the dejected 'haviour of the visage,
> Together with all *forms*, *moods*, *shapes* of grief
> That can *denote me truly*. These indeed '*seem*';
> For these are actions that a man might *play*.
> But *I* have that within which passes show —
> These but the trappings and the suits of woe.
>
> (1.2.77-86. Emphasis added)[2]

Nevertheless, this still provides a significant index to his problematic mode of thought, notably his profound mistrust of appearances and imaginative paralysis in terms of positing an alternative. As Jan Kott observes, Hamlet "fears, most of all, a clear-cut definition."[3] Definition can be a fearful thing because it constitutes a *finis*, a limit or end, and we may be loath to have people classify, pigeonhole or stereotype us, because we wish to remain open, dynamic free agents who can make an independent choice about our actions from one moment to the next and not shut off any avenue of potentiality; the problem comes when this fear of being wrongly labelled produces a self-consciousness which makes it impossible to commit oneself wholeheartedly to a course of action. Hamlet would prefer the sweet deliverance of abstraction from such practical issues:

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[1] G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 32.

[2] References to *Hamlet* are from the New Penguin Shakespeare edition, ed. T.J.B. Spencer and introduced by Anne Barton (London, 1980).

[3] Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 57.

> O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew;
> Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, God,
> How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
> (1.2.129-134)

If Hamlet's "too too sullied flesh," base practical humanity, would *dissolve*, he would be saved the problem of *resolving* his mind, which even flirts with suicide—the last option of the impotent idealist, the malcontent who has no available means to translate his vision of life's potential into actuality. In the following speech, Hamlet delineates his self-preoccupation and sense of being cut off from a glorious past by the death of the father after whom he is named and whom he holds as a pattern of manhood, "So excellent a king, that was to this [Claudius] / Hyperion to a satyr"; and the new court, ruled by a *satyr*, is less suited to eulogy, heroism and glorification than to a *satirical* vision of the world, where "Frailty, thy name is woman," for his mother can show "most wicked speed" and "post / With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!" Gertrude's speed of resolution has been untimely, distasteful and demonstrative of the most basic human appetites, qualities which combine to taunt Hamlet's imagination and make him picture her sin with self-lacerating, graphic clarity and consequent sexual nausea.

However, Horatio enters and tells Hamlet what we have known from the first scene, that a link remains with the old world from which Hamlet feels so traumatically exiled: the ghost of his father has been sighted, "Form of the thing, each word made true and good,/The apparition comes." Hamlet has just been mourning the lack of suitable forms, truth and goodness in a world of nauseating inversions ("The funeral baked meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables") and hollow illusion (presided over by a king who is contrasted to a man, and "no more like my father / Than I to Hercules," presaging the mockery of heroic, material ideals which he views himself as too small to attain). Hamlet's excitement at the news snaps him out of his depression as he recovers the

Herculean ideal of authority to which he might *resolve* himself.[4]

Meanwhile, Laertes is discharging his authority as a brother by providing his sister Ophelia with contrary advice, "Be wary then. Best safety lies in fear," as "Youth to itself rebels, though none else near" (1.3.43-44), a "good lesson" she intends to keep "As watchman to my heart," although it posits a model of immature, passive self-restriction which her lack of autonomy in her relationship with her father confirms as a character note; Polonius's advice to Laertes is, in turn, about self-restriction, and its repetitive pattern of injunctions and modifiers (do this, but not that, or not excessively) is likely to acquire a comic effect of rambling length; "Neither a borrower nor a lender be" suggests self-sufficiency but can also cloak petit-bourgeois smugness; and "to thine own self be true, / And it must follow, as the night the day, / Thou canst not then be false to any man" sounds less concerned with integrity than with co-operative reciprocity because of its pat, self-evident, formulaic expression, which makes it resemble something closer to Peer Gynt's troll motto, "Thine own self is enough." Like Claudius and Gertrude, Polonius does not offer very inspiring models of behaviour for his children; the King and Queen's perversion of sexuality prevents Hamlet from imagining it in a healthy, untainted context, while Polonius prefers to maintain an attitude of repression rather than mature reciprocity. Ophelia should think herself "a baby" to be deluded by Hamlet's professions of love, and, in a piece of retentive money-imagery, he orders, "Tender yourself more dearly, / Or . . . you'll tender me a fool"; of Hamlet, "Believe so much in him that he is young, / And with a larger tether may he walk / Than may be given you," and that his vows are consequently likely to be "brokers / Not of that dye which their investments show," even "Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds, / The better to beguile." As Anne Barton says, "Comedy insists that life must go on, that the dead must be forgotten, and the means is always the same:

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[4] David Pirie's article "*Hamlet* Without the Prince," *Critical Quarterly*, 14, no. 4 (Winter 1972), 293-314, also points out that 'Hamlet knows from the outset that his world offers him no 'set of objects' which can accurately reflect his feelings" (302); however, Pirie's reading of Hamlet's character is more insistently ironical than that proposed in this article, in that he claims that Hamlet "knows in fact that every relationship, every activity that Elsinore offers him is a false script" (298), but I would propose that Hamlet is aware of the limitations of his stance and comes to see the 'scripts' offered by his father and Fortinbras as potentially dynamic roles to 'play through.' I would also question the extent to which "the audience is asked to enjoy the tension created by the leading player's refusal to act in the play" (Pirie, 294), preferring to suggest that this dramatic tension is offset against audience desire to see the player do so, thus fulfilling an old dramatic contracting of generic expectation and extracting "measure for measure."

sexual love"; and she points out that Hamlet is "unmarried and eligible" and that "the play advances comedy's usual solution in the form of . . . Ophelia"[5]; unfortunately for them, it also contains parental figures who discourage their children from envisaging anything but the basest manifestations of love, let alone from defining themselves in relation to a model of mature, healthy sexuality, which the play fails to posit. Hamlet threatens to remain shut up in himself, a prisoner of isolated alienation, whilst Ophelia will fatefully conform to her father's image of her dependence on him.

Hamlet, in contrast, has to confront an image of his father, which he first suspects to be another disjunction of the natural. In a sense it is; as Marcellus says, its appearance portends "something rotten" in the state of Denmark (1.4.94), and he can only hope with Horatio that heaven will take an ordering control and "direct" it. The Ghost decisively nominates Claudius as the cause of his death and furthermore inflames Hamlet's already-eager imagination of horror with a satirical description of the incestuous union, redolent in provocative disgust at the defilement of self-abandon beneath its fair semblance:

> So lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
> Will sate itself in a celestial bed
> And prey on garbage.
>
> (1.5.56-58)

The description of the effects of Claudius's poison on King Hamlet's body continue and literalize this theme of physical corruption. Hamlet nominates the Ghost's revelation as the most significant experience of his life and its new lodestone, but the core of this lesson is really an intensification of Hamlet's previous mistrust of form and appearance in actions, indeed it confirms their most malignant possibilities, "That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain." However, Hamlet's brief reunion with the elder Hamlet is not a mere intensifying mirror-reflection; it also posits, once more, an ideal of action for Hamlet to strive towards—something he has lacked since his father's death—but nevertheless one which he would rather have remained within his mother's womb than face the responsibility for ("The time is out of joint. O, cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!")

We next see Polonius about the business of watching over his son from afar, but through a remarkably un-paternal maze of twisted, literally fragmented logic; in order to find Laertes, Polonius orders Reynaldo to circulate the worst possible slanders of his son's intemperance that he may be more likely to gain an honestly indiscreet report of his possible activities, for example, entering a brothel, and thereby find him:

---

[5] Barton, p. 24 (n. 2 above).

> See you now—
> Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth,
> And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
> With windlasses and with assays of bias,
> By indirections find directions out.
>
> (2.1.62-66)

As an example of Polonius's "wisdom and reach," the whole scheme sounds a perversely reductive and hypocritical business. Admittedly Polonius may know that his son has a streak of incontinence making this action basely realistic, in which case Laertes's valedictory advice to Ophelia on tense self-discipline sounds doubly unpleasant in retrospect through its hypocrisy; more likely, Polonius is assuming the worst of his son, not that it apparently lessens his affection for him, but it presupposes the worst of possibilities, and perhaps this "bias" "By indirections" serves to posit or suggest particularly reductive and debased "directions"; his characteristic negativity recurs in the immediately subsequent interview with Ophelia, who has been affrighted by Hamlet's display of distraction. She seems concerned for Hamlet's state, which she twice describes as "piteous," but Polonius is characteristically dismissive of any possibilities save the meanest, romantic love debased into frustrated lust:

> This is the very ecstasy of love,
> Whose violent property fordoes itself
> And leads the will to desperate undertakings
> As oft as any passion under heaven
> That does afflict our natures.

Perhaps Polonius is characterizing others from his own self-knowledge (as he suggests overtly at 2.2.190: "And truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love, very near this"). Ophelia claims only to have complied with her father's wishes in repelling his advances, and everything becomes clear to Polonius's logic: "That hath made him mad" (2.1.110). His admission of "jealousy" seems an honest self-reproach and accurate diagnosis of the darker aspect of his retentive repression of his daughter, but he justifies it by proposing that he is licensed by the inclinations of his age:

> . . . it is as proper to our age
> To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
> As it is common for the younger sort
> To lack discretion.

It is presumably on the same grounds that his son is licensed to visit brothels. Polonius's imagination is confined to the worst of all possible worlds, and therefore he only looks as far as things which may confirm his suspicions.

Hamlet's own official (if not natural) parents, Claudius and Gertrude, also want news of their son. Unlike Polonius, they hope to divine this from their son's happier sources of recreation: his friendship, which dates from childhood, with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; but there is self-interested policy behind the fair, concerned, courteous exchanges which only serve to justify the use of spies on their son. It is also interesting that they refer back to Hamlet's childhood for an emotional lever, unaware that this 'interpretation' of his emotional impulses will be fatefully retarded. Their lack of confidence in predicting their son's possible actions is unsurprising, indeed may even be shared by Hamlet himself. Claudius speaks truer than he knows when he conjectures that something has put Hamlet "much from th'understanding of himself" (2.2.9), and their speculation about "th'exterior" and "the inward man" recalls Hamlet's own initial sphinx-riddle of anti-characterization which insists he has "that within which passes show" and cannot be "denoted truly."

Claudius turns to Polonius, who proceeds to his confident reductive diagnosis of Hamlet's distraction which the King and Queen seem ready to entertain. In intending to find "Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed / Within the centre," Polonius's aims, if not his means, are sympathetic. We the audience have not seen Hamlet for two lengthy (and in some ways deliberately tedious) scenes, only heard partial reports and unpromising attempts at understanding him, and we may share a curiosity about the madness Ophelia reported— was it feigned or true?— even though we discount Polonius's self-satisfied interpretation. Hamlet is, after all, the character to whom we feel closest as we share his moral perspective and central knowledge of the Ghost's information and injunction. When he at last appears, he is reading from a satirical book and mimicking its tone, scoring a point off Polonius by reporting the "satirical rogue's" scathing assessment of old men, thus avoiding complete personal commitment to its consequences; a form of witticism well suited to Hamlet's temperamental inclinations. His regressive lack of inclination to engage the world, but consciousness of his injunctions to do so (compare "The time is out of joint . . ."), apparently persists into a subsequent private interview with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, as he claims "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space were it not that I have bad dreams" (2.2. 253-255) or intimations of mature responsibilities; but he is prepared to defend these challenging impulses which Guildenstern dismisses as "dreams" because he recognizes that some ideals of behaviour are required to make sense of the world: "Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars shadows." However, this implied support for heroic resolve quickly breaks down into a persuasive but conventional vein of satiric cosmic despair, more negative interpretation of the world which stresses its own subjectivity, even its distorting qualities: the firmament is not "a foul congregation of vapours," which seems so to the diseased view, but a "majestical roof fretted with golden fire"; man is not a "quintessence of dust" but something which aspires to divinity; the fact that both views are expressed in powerful poetic terms only serves to heighten their contradiction and suggest that Hamlet is defining himself as a satirist whilst being aware of the discrepancy between this description and his still-vague inner reality and unformed commitment.[6]

But the news of the impending players changes his mood. His statement "He that plays the king shall be welcome—his majesty shall have tribute of me" may be a wry jibe at Claudius, who merely plays the king, or genuine admiration for someone who can assume the responsibility of such a role—as he is yet to do—and therefore deserves praise; and there is a similar self-comment by proxy in his comment on child actors:

> Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players—as it is most like, if their means are not better—their writers do them wrong to exclaim against their own succession?

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[6] Janette Dillon's chapter on the play in *Shakespeare and the Solitary Man* (London: Methuen, 1981) gives a concise and illuminating account of Hamlet's alienation and its consequences, but does not suggest a sense of process whereby what is seen as Hamlet's only connection with his world, killing Claudius in the last scene, is achieved. Dillon claims that Hamlet suspects forms to the extent that "Physical space becomes insignificant by comparison with the space of the inner world, which taints the whole of the physical world with its viewpoints" (p. 112) and that Hamlet's solipsistic subjectivity yields the significant interpretation of the "goodly frame"; whereas I would suggest that it is more of an inadvertant betrayal of the satirical persona, which reflects a continued basic striving towards the unity of form and substance rather than further evidence of his doubt in absolutes. The satiric position posits a moral order conspicuous by its absence in the world, but here I think Hamlet's awareness of the paradoxes in the stance constitutes a dissatisfaction with its solipsism—not with a despair of ever attaining objectivity and congruence, as Dillon seems to suggest.

Hamlet is similarly an outgrown child faced with the task of becoming a common player—with all the banal limitation "common" entails—fearfully unable to countenance the requirements and commitments of succession by seizing the kingdom of Denmark. But Rosencrantz insists that even these children can act, successfully, "Hercules and his load too" —an unwitting suggestion that the gap between Hamlet and his father can be bridged, remembering that Claudius is "no more like my father / Than I to Hercules"; the heroic world is seen as having been mocked and displaced, but a link can perhaps be re-established through *acting*, becoming the part by assuming the form with sufficient commitment (as in Brecht's *Arturo Ui*: "It's a funny thing about tobacco. When a man is smoking, he looks calm. And if you imitate a calm-looking man and light a cigarette, you get to be calm yourself"[7]). As Hamlet says, players are "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live"; their reports of Hercules, Pyrrhus, Hecuba and Gonzago fix and communicate historicized identities for the edification of future generations, a transcendence of the "quintessence of dust" that is "sullied flesh."

But more generally, *play* outside its specific professional sphere is the process through which children confront and develop their own potentialities, enacting roles for which their parents have often provided the pattern, and stimulating the imagination in training for the full acceptance of the maturity which will necessitate such developmental flexibility. But Hamlet lacks the player's emotional commitment to his role:

> Is it not monstrous that this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
> Could force his soul so to his own conceit
> That from her working all his visage wann'd,
> Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
> A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
> With forms to his conceit?

Congruity of the outward and the inward has been attained through the enactment of emotion, which generates genuine emotion. However, Hamlet's self reproaches still do not translate into action, and therefore as yet conform to the satirist's observance of the breach between the worthy and the unworthy ("That I, the son of a dear father murdered / . . . Must like a whore unpack my heart with words"); the satiric perspective, though attractive and sometimes convenient to entertain in its fundamental self-conscious despair, must be transcended for the more mature and fruitful option of decisive, practical heroic action ("The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King").

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[7] Bertolt Brecht, *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 75.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are forced to report back that their not particularly formidable intelligences heve failed to bring Hamlet "to some confession / Of his true state" (3.1.9-10); whilst Hamlet's resolution has again subsided into hesitant nausea at possibility ("To be") and a regressive fear of life itself ("or not to be"). However, "sleep" may give way to "dreams" (66), recalling his impulse to forsake responsibility and "be bounded in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space were it not that I have bad dreams"; Hamlet has to learn to accept what he "is heir to" so that his enterprise might not itself dissipate and disintegrate from its own definition, "lose the name of action." His subsequent satirical diatribe against Ophelia is problematic. In returning his tokens of affection, she is mechanically obeying the will of Polonius, the King and the Queen, and therefore proceeds as an agent of the fundamental satire-engendering corruption[8]; yet Hamlet's response, launched from the satiric commonplace that beauty and honesty are irreconcileable, seems harsh and painful, and Ophelia at least indicates some concern for Hamlet in his distractions as well as registering a sense of personal grievance, exclaiming "O, help him, you sweet heavens!" and "O heavenly powers, restore him!" But Hamlet is swept onwards by the impetus of his own satire which proceeds from profound self-loathing—"I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me"—to a Vindice-like outburst of misogyny and sexual nausea:

> I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. . . . I say we will have no more marriage. Those that are married already—all but one shall live. The rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

Ophelia's distress in the apparent loss of Hamlet's numerous potentialities—"The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword, / Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state"—seems apt and pained. But Claudius, who enters and views her grief, may be more correct in his interpretation that even this melancholy-satirist Hamlet is not the full birth and expression of that "thing within which passeth show"; as he conjectures:

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[8] John Dover Wilson's belief that "The unhappy girl has sadly overplayed her part" (*What Happens in Hamlet*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1935, p. 130) probably overrates the passive Ophelia's imaginative contribution to the meeting, if not its tragic effect.

> There's something in his soul
> O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
> And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
> Will be some danger . . . .

He proposes a journey to England to "expel / This something-settled matter in his heart, / Whereon his brain still beating puts him thus / From fashion of himself." But Hamlet is fashioning a self and taking tentative steps towards mature action perhaps too quickly to be arrested; in a moment of re-creative sport he can advise the players to "suit the action to the word, the word to the action" (3.2.17-18)—healing the court's corrupt schism of the two by exemplary action. The secret Claudius has spied in his soul comes close to articulation, if not execution, as Hamlet for once freely interprets matters for others' information by providing a critical glossary on the players' show. Acting's negative aspect of deception is replaced by acting's positive capabilities for engendering and realising potential: reflecting guilt upon the stricken Claudius and implying the formal revenge structure which will have to run its course and climax in Hamlet's action.[9] The Player King has forced the player King into self-revelation.

Hamlet continues to elude the probing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, notably in his conceit of the recorder pipe: "You would play upon me. You would seem to know my stops. You would pluck out the heart of my mystery" (3.2. 372-373), but such attempts to define him are in vain, as the very comparison cannot be held: "Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me." Polonius will even try to humour Hamlet by supporting his definitions of the cloud, but Hamlet proves that comparisons are odious: a cloud that can be likened to a "camel," "weasel" and "whale" cannot be very much like any of these. Once alone, he determines to see his mother and begins a piece of purple revenge-invocation which would fit easily into the many revenge-plays he might have seen or acted in himself:

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[9] Alvin Kernan, *The Playwright as Magician* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), also notes this moment as one of "restored confidence in the value of playing" (108), as far as its effect on Claudius is concerned; but does not add that playing can also enable Hamlet to envisage new possibilities, as well as avoid reductive definitions of his self.

> 'Tis now the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to this world. Now I could drink hot blood
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on.

But this possible opportunity for fulfilment through imitation is contradicted by a characteristic fear of the loss of his own rather nebulous integrity, thus again breaking the harmony of impulse and action:

> O heart, lose not thy nature. Let not ever
> The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.
> Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
> I will speak daggers to her, but use none.
> My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites.

By intending to "speak daggers but use none" with his mother, Hamlet intends to play the satirist rather than the revenger; though, in fact, he both speaks and uses daggers: Polonius himself falls victim to a fatal misinterpretation when Hamlet kills him for the King. But after this rare flurry of rash activity, Hamlet returns to his verbal weapons, citing the mythological precedents of the heroic values with which he associates his father ("Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself, / An eye like Mars, to threaten and command, / A station like the herald Mercury"), to contrast them with the debased satyr / satire world which has, through his mother's co-operation with Claudius, supplanted them (". . . to live / In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty!"). This diatribe of satiric utterance seems to be on the point of reforming its target, as in Marston's *The Malcontent*, for it holds up a heightened mirror to the Queen's self ("Thou turnest mine eyes into my very soul"), but this seems insufficient through its necessary distance from the actual instigation of active blood-revenge, for the Ghost enters to "whet" Hamlet's "almost blunted purpose," but in fact this interruption diminishes some of the force of Hamlet's confrontation with his mother, as it permits her to define, and therefore partially dismiss, some of his railing as "madness," despite Hamlet's protestations otherwise. He manages, however, to insist on his own status as "the son of a king" (4.2.13) as opposed to "sponges" like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, passive figures who define themselves only in so far as they are filled by another's stronger will; when such a one understands him not, he is "glad of it"; as for his famously cryptic remarks, "The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing . . . of nothing," this might be glossed as suggesting that the body (Polonius) is with the King (the late King Hamlet) but the King (Claudius) is not with the body (rightfully dead, but he will soon be made "a thing of nothing"); or it may be a further comment on Claudius's enforced disjunction between appearance and reality, in which 'title' is divorced from its rightful holder, making both kings to some extent things of nothing: King Hamlet dead, Claudius a sham king in jest.

Under the circumstances it is therefore surprising to find Claudius afraid of Hamlet's popularity with the "distracted multitude, / Who like not in their judgement but their eyes" (4.3.4-5), as this suggests they would still choose Claudius were his and Hamlet's respective inner realities known, which perhaps reflects his own tentative sense of penitence and his fear of Hamlet's ominous inscrutability. Hamlet continues his satiric attempts at unsettling intimation with his malcontent meditation on how "We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots." Thus may a king go "a progress through the guts of a beggar" and hollow worldly pomp be levelled (and perhaps in the process, a rightful king—Hamlet—may force a weapon to progress through the guts of an undeserving beggar—Claudius; in Hamlet's mood for deliberately vague verbal foolery, inviting interpretation yet resisting definition, this may not be a completely fanciful reading). His wilfully disturbing reference to Claudius as his "mother" under the imagistic terms of the marriage contract is the most laboured expression of his threatening fixations. No wonder Claudius impatiently wishes "everything sealed and done" by "letters congruing" to a specifically finite, terminal end—"the present death of Hamlet."

Despite his dark hints and knowledge, Hamlet is strangely compliant with Claudius's authority (which he knows to be spurious and will suggest so to others); it may be that he prefers to remain within the satirist's domain of utterance on the vanity and futility of the world, and therefore of any bid to change it; however, this world-view perpetuates the state it observes and makes the viewer as debased as those viewed ("What is a man, / If his chief good and market of his time / Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more," 4.4. 33-35), to the extent of sharing transgressers' culpability until he can by implication identify himself with Claudius ("How stand I then, / That have a father killed, a mother stained"). The example of Fortinbras, leading his forces with Alcibiades-like practical resolve, provides Hamlet with a model and yardstick for his own conduct, hitherto excessively "thinking too precisely on th'event":

Examples gross as earth exhort me.
Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed,
Makes mouths at thė invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an eggshell.

The means ("gross as earth") and the guiding principle ("for a fantasy and a trick of fame") may be as objectionable to Hamlet as the enforced "common" status of the grown-up child actors; nevertheless, they may be practically necessary; and he sees, in the example of the "delicate and tender prince" commanding the enterprise, a sensitive but determined exemplary figure who flatters Hamlet's sense of his own potential—not perhaps the most mature grounds for practical action, but an unformed personality's first step in that direction.

Ophelia's psychological disintegration shows the grim effect of recent events on her rather sheltered disposition. Her Valentine's day song, as Anne Barton remarks, "offers a sad testimony to her hidden curiosity about precisely those areas of adult sexuality from which Polonius" and her brother "would protect her."[10] Without the directives to self-characterization represented by Polonius, such as they are, and Hamlet, she is incapable of maintaining psychological self-control; hence her mad elegies for paternal influence and sexual love. Her constricted upbringing has afforded no wider or more satisfactory models on which to base an autonomous existence.[11]

Claudius, meanwhile, is encouraging Laertes to become a form of counter-Hamlet, similarly bent on revenge against his father's murderer, and the King goes so far as to provide, *in loco parentis* as it were, a flattering model of attainable heroic glory for Laertes, namely Lamord. This parallels Hamlet's admiration for Fortinbras, but Claudius adds the twist that Hamlet's envious mistrust of the comparison supposedly contributed to Polonius's death, and suggests that Hamlet's return will give Laertes the chance "To show yourself in deed your father's son / More than in words" (4.7.124-125). Thus he provides a similarly unformed personality with the paternal directives which Hamlet has frequently felt lacking, but at the same time initiates a sense of Hamlet and Laertes as somehow antitypical—like Hal and Hotspur, Edgar and Edmund, inevitable foes unsettlingly similar and formally congruent in their opposition, which is in turn partially a consequence of their likeness.

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[10] Barton, p. 26 (n. 2 above).

[11] Thus I see Ophelia's dilemma in terms opposite to Martin Scofield (*The Ghosts of Hamlet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), who sees both Hamlet and Ophelia as doomed tools of their respective parents (169). I think Scofield's attention to parental influence and its often "disastrous results" apt, but feel less easy in equating the Ghost's inspiration of Hamlet to action with Polonius's morally and psychologically misjudged bid to use Ophelia in her function as an infantile automaton.

Hamlet himself has yet to negotiate the full complexities of his 'education', but is aided by the oracular figure of the gravedigger, who began his occupation "that day our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras"—which was also "that very day young Hamlet was born" (5.1.141,144). In his company, Hamlet views the skull and says "Here's a fine revolution, an we had the trick to see it"; a final interpretation is sensed to be required, the focal object of the scene being the mortal remains of Yorick, Hamlet's childhood playmate who "bore me on his back a thousand times"—"And now how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung the lips that I have kissed I know not how oft." Hamlet's joke at the expense of "my lady," who, "let her paint an inch thick, to this favour . . . must come," is a piece of conventional Vindice-style satire which to an extent distances an unpleasant reality by a formulaic response, and his meditation on the "base uses" to which we all return, however eminent, is likely to have more sense of immediacy than the previous satirical tracing of a king's progress through a beggar's guts.

But his reverie is interrupted by Ophelia's funeral—a ceremony through which to make formalized valedictions to the dead and thus release them, as it were, and enable the mourners to transcend the loss. Laertes, however, cannot rise to his place in the ritual, and is as loath to release the bodily form of his dead sister as he was earlier incapable of letting her proceed in the world without his controlling advice: "Hold off the earth awhile, / Till I have caught her once more in mine arms." Hamlet recognizes the excessiveness of such sentiments:

> What is he whose grief
> Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
> Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
> Like wonder-wounded hearers?

Hamlet's preoccupations with verbal conceits have been prey to similar inappropriate attachments to a near hypnotic dead past which nevertheless cannot give birth to future potential; but his next utterance has a hitherto unheard tone, "This is I, / Hamlet the Dane." Not Hamlet the mourner, Hamlet the satirist, Hamlet the ghost-driven reluctant scourge, even Hamlet the son, or Hamlet who has "that within which passes show"; simply "Hamlet the Dane," and therefore Hamlet in a national and social context[12]; and, though his action to date has made this claim seem unlikely, a Hamlet who can proclaim with practical directness and commitment:

> I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers
> Could not with all their quantity of love
> Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

For that matter, little remains that Hamlet can now do for her, and it seems that Hamlet has not yet really put Ophelia into the past tense in his own mind or emotions; but their joint potentiality was indeed a love beyond the resources of forty thousand brothers, namely that of husband and wife, or lovers. Hamlet admittedly mimics Laertes's hyperboles in challenging him to a test of their love and even offers to be buried with them both, but this is recognized as a contest of words rather than deeds: "Nay, an thou'lt mouth / I'll rant as well as thou," the difference being that Hamlet says "Yet have I in me something dangerous, / Which let thy wisdom fear." His inner potential, the "thing which passes show," is becoming more clearly delineated in contrast to mere verbal bluster. Hamlet will be resolute to his own sense of integrity in the face of hostility, if necessary:

> Let Hercules himself do what he may,
> The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

This is an exact reference to the heroic ideal represented by his father with which Hamlet has hitherto found it impossible to identify himself consistently. Along with his emotional directness and self-characterization as "Hamlet the Dane," this suggests his character is undergoing an, as yet vague and gradual, development.

But what has been the pivotal event to cause this? Hamlet's subsequent dialogue with Horatio (5.2.1-56) informs both confidant and audience of events which are unsettlingly new—unsettling because for so much of

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[12] Marjorie Garber also remarks upon the importance of this self-assertion in terms of private and public congruence (*Coming of Age in Shakespeare*, London: Methuen, 1981, p. 65).

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the play we share Hamlet's perspectives, and for once we have seen him act *after* some apparent meditation, reversing the usual pattern of his letting meditation forestall action. Now we hear what event caused Hamlet to reurn to Elsinore. He tells how he acted "Rashly, / And praised be rashness for it":

> Let us know
> Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
> When our deep plots do pall, and that should learn us
> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.

This is notable in that it suggests that the mainly cerebral and self-restrictive Hamlet is permitting himself to be changed by intuitive or providential impulses, even allowing that when the 'child-actor' figure he has sometimes resembled faces a crisis of action, "heaven will *direct* it." This time, before Hamlet "could make a prologue to my brains," his enemies "had begun the play," and hasty improvisation was required to define himself within these restrictions, or be lost; and with urgent decisiveness, he sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths, characterizing himself in unrepentant, heroic terms, " 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes / Between the pass and fell incensed points / Of mighty opposites," driving Horatio to exclaim "Why, what a king is this," suggesting the Prince has, in terms of character, come of age. Hamlet seems to be following the promise of similar developments in terms of his social role, considering the man who fatefully divorced "th'election and my hopes" and contemplating the re-establishment of a national and personal congruity:

> is't not perfect conscience
> To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damned
> To let this canker of our nature come
> In further evil?

Like Fortinbras "exposing what is mortal," Hamlet is prepared to make a single, decisive, heroic blow to expel the monarch of infertility whose reign has enveloped all around in the spiritual malaise of a necessarily satiric worldview. Hamlet is also able to transcend his psychological alienation and understand the viewpoints of others, including Laertes: "For by the image of my cause I see / The portraiture of his." And again, as on the sea-voyage, Hamlet is forced to accept a 'role' in a scenario devised by others—the prospect of a duel with Laertes—and bring his own individuality to this "action that a man might play," once more placing his trust in the "special providence" which even governs "the fall of a sparrow," in order to face up to the situation with mature adaptability:

> If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man knows of aught he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

This willingness to face swiftly successive challenges is a long way from the character who claimed "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space were it not that I have bad dreams"; and the conviction that "readiness is all" is a considerable advance in willing to accept mature responsibility compared to the specifically unready Prince who was so terrified by the "heartache and the thousand natural shocks" to which he was "heir" that he could view death as a comfortingly regressive "sleep."

Might it perhaps be that, confronting the unavoidable realities of human fate in Yorick's skull, Hamlet learnt that certain basic human truths are beyond his personal control of arrestment, and must be accepted? His previous considerations of physical decay had been from behind the consciously witty but subjective convention of the satirist's mask, or conceived in terms of the sexual nausea which Claudius and Gertrude's behaviour evoked; and his confrontation with death through the Ghost of his father featured a figure who was pale but "again in complete steel" and physically recognizable despite the grisly effects which reportedly accompanied his death. Yorick's skull was in many ways a more immediate emblem of time and death's results in the human world for Hamlet to come to terms with; and, albeit with revulsion, he could still make himself link his childhood memories of affection with the skeletal features, and proceed to diagnose human mortality from that basis; Laertes, on the other hand, could not even release his sister to the grave through his formalized role as mourner at a funeral; he had to try to cling to the past in a physically literal way. By acting *in* other people's scenarios, Hamlet has learnt to act *through* them, and relinquish his precious grip on that conveniently indeterminate "that within which passes show"; in all senses, he is now ready to show, to act, and thus be prepared, through the paradox of individually animating a predetermined role, to denote himself truly.

Preparing for the duel, Hamlet matches the King and Queen's false display of love and courtesy with a correspondingly politic disclaimer of his previous behaviour, which he identifies as a madness inimical to his true core of being; however, Laertes insists on formal satisfaction. All concerned, duellists and courtly audience, are involved in a final play which resembles the wryly 'loaded' masques and dumbshows of many an Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy—Hamlet speaks more ironically than even he knows when he suggests that he "will this brothers' wager frankly play" (5.2.247), for real murder will shortly erupt through the confines of a formalized game. The idea of 'audience involvement' also gains a grim significance; as at *The Murder of Gonzago* Claudius and Gertrude found an extension of the spectacle into their supposedly passive and detached roles, so now the Queen drinks from the poisoned cup. There is more dramatic irony in Hamlet's challenge to Laertes, "You do but dally./ I pray you, pass with your best violence"; "incensed" with true feeling within their formalized roles, they truly wound each other fatally; and discovering the full ramifications of the final scenario he is forced to play, Hamlet can at least bring his own decisive improvisation and extension to the action with all the rapidity implied by the reaction-and-action in the lines: "The point envenomed too? / Then, venom, to thy work." Even beyond this, in death, Hamlet has some final concerns that the spectators (on and before the stage) should interpret the show correctly; those who are "but mutes or audience to this act" are prevented from receiving a full self-explication from Hamlet by the poison's fast action, but he can issue the injunction to Horatio to "Report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied." He is concerned finally with the creation of an objective Hamlet, a historicized personality to inspire and instruct others as his father's career did him. Horatio must not die, insists Hamlet, for "what a wounded name, / Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me"; the man who has predominantly shared Hamlet's viewpoint on events, along with the theatre audience, is also implicated in a role, to "tell my story." Horatio's initial attempt runs thus:

> So shall you hear
> Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,
> Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,
> Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
> And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
> Fallen on th'inventors' heads. All this can I
> Truly deliver.

As Anne Barton comments, this melange of "intrigue and sensational event, Machiavellian scheming, and fatal miscalculation" in many ways "sounds like the prologue to a conventional revenge tragedy"; she notes that "As an account of *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*—or *The Murder of Gonzago*—it is (just) acceptable. As a description of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, it is not. Horatio astonishes us by leaving out everything that seems important, reducing all that is distinctive about this play to a plot stereotype. Although his tale is, on one level, accurate enough, it is certainly not Hamlet's 'story.' "[13]

On the other hand, Bernard Shaw wrote persuasively in his Preface to his *Three Plays for Puritans* on the way in which conventional drama and conventional social action mirror and intensify each other and influence an audience's manner of perception. Perhaps we should not be too harsh on Horatio, who, like Hamlet, is debarred from delivering a full explication of events at this moment. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has indeed included all the factors which Horatio has sketchily listed; the point is that, in adopting a conventional role, that of heroic avenger, Hamlet has played himself through it and translated some of his and its potential into actuality. As R.D. Laing proposes, "In so far as I put myself 'into' what I do, I become myself through this doing."[14] The moral dilemmas and existential complexities are, as Anne Barton claims, distinctly presented in the tragedy Hamlet "wistfully perceives" in terms of "the one Shakespeare has written."[15] The revenge plotline represents the necessary bedrock of artistic and perceptual convention from which every notable work of art must make its individual and individualizing departure in order to become vital. The revenger's role represents the necessary bedrock of artistic and social convention to which Hamlet must, for all its confinements, commit himself, in order to extend and fulfil both the role and his own personal potential. Hamlet is right to insist to Horatio that his individuality *and* his function ("me *and* my cause") be reported aright, in order to leave behind as precisely-defined a historicized personality as possible. And, bearing in mind that dramatic players are "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time," the form of the communication of Hamlet's story, without and probably within the play-world of Elsinore, is unwittingly anticipated by Horatio's avowal that the full complexities of the matter will be "presently performed," and by Fortinbras's intention to "call the noblest to the audience" and command to "Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage." Indeed, Fortinbras seems to posit a Hamlet somewhat in his own (ideal?) image, ordering "The soldiers' music and the rites of war" for his

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[13] Barton, p. 52 (n. 2 above).

[14] R.D. Laing, *Self and Others* (London: Pelican, 1971), p. 127.

[15] Barton, p. 54 (n. 2 above).

"passage"; this, like Horatio's plot summary, may seem ill-suited to the often meditative and hesitant young intellectual whose progress we have observed; on the other hand, there is a cyclical appropriateness in that the sight of Fortinbras may have set Hamlet's resolution in motion by virtue of its status as inspirational model, and Fortinbras's echoing admiration fulfills a circuit of existential confirmation. Also, an aspect of this subjective interpretation of Hamlet is necessitated by the very restrictions which have been imposed on the subject's life. Fortinbras aptly but sadly reminds us that certain aspects of Hamlet's potentiality will never be fulfilled, but have been arrested in development ("he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal"); the challenge of the revenger's role was ultimately answered, but not the challenge represented by the role of king.

Jan Kott says "*Hamlet* is like a sponge. Unless produced in a stylized or antiquarian fashion, it immediately absorbs all the problems of our time."[16] However, it is not a "sponge" in the sense that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are, being defined entirely by the forces that act upon it, or it would become a mere dramatic Rorschach blot, a playground for subjectivity; as Horatio says, it is a narrative of distinct and unalterable components, which include carnal, bloody and unnatural acts, accidental judgements, casual slaughters, cunning, and, particularly, forced cause. Yet it is true that *Hamlet* evokes explication continually, being remarkably devoid of clear-cut directive to perception and interpretation whilst, like a Beckett play, simultaneously insisting that attempts at perception and interpretation are constantly to be made and re-made. Interpretation and attempts at definition are the main activities of the very characters, most of whom are continually engaged with us in attempting to interpret the character of Hamlet, including Hamlet himself; and there is a disconcerting tendency for Hamlet to assume the qualities of the person trying to interpret him. To Polonius he is a sexually frustrated young wanton, to Fortinbras an image of martial heroism. Bernard Shaw wrote of his particular affection for the character, who in many ways reminded him of himself, and Coleridge's seeing himself reflected in Hamlet is, of course, well known. It is notable that Hamlet, in all his opacities and complexities, is probably, paradoxically, the Shakespearean character with whom most people, particularly young men, sympathize and identify. As Schoenbaum's *Shakespeare's Lives* testifies, people who attempt to biographize Shakespeare usually tell us more about themselves than about Shakespeare. However, no work of art can be divorced from each of its audience member's

[16] Kott, p. 52 (n. 3 above).

personal imaginative associations. The triumph of *Hamlet* may be its very ability to challenge its spectator to participate in its activities, apply the issues to his or her own life and, even through their own moments of 'playing Hamlet'—an activity to which we are all to some extent prey—to provide us with a sympathetic image, a figure who may provide the imaginative means to recognize and engage our own individual 'States of Denmark' and selves.

Hamlet—An Early Existential Outsider?

CHRISTINE GOMEZ

For the purpose of this study, an existential Outsider may be defined as an individual who reflects on human existence and his own predicament in the universe and becomes aware of his alienation from the human condition and from himself. He experiences a profound estrangement from the human situation in an alien universe. His longing for a meaning in life and a rational explanation of the universe meets with frustration when confronted with what appears to him as the irrationality and chaos of the world. Death seems to be the only certainty that awaits him. When this realisation hits him, he is stripped of his illusion about himself and faces his own insignificance. He feels alienated from himself and stands outside himself, observing himself with detachment and exercising stringent self-criticism. Such a realisation of alienation from existence and from oneself may strike an individual in a personal crisis or a moment of vision or in what Karl Jaspers calls "Grenzsituationen" or "frontier situations" or "boundary situations."

In drama, the existential Outsider proper appears in the twentieth century out of the intellectual background of existential philosophy. The dramatic protagonists of Camus and Sartre embody their authors' metaphysical concerns like freedom, authentic living and a constant awareness of absurdity. Camus's Caligula and Sartre's Orestes are existential Outsiders par excellence.

Shakespeare's Hamlet may however be seen as an anticipation of the existential hero. He experiences alienation from existence, though only as a temporary phase. His father's death and his mother's hasty re-marriage together form the boundary situation which precipitates him into a condition in which he is overwhelmed by a profound disgust for life, an awareness of the irrationality of the universe and a realisation of the futility of individual as well as collective endeavour. He is painfully aware of his alienation and speaks about it continually. His awareness that revenge cannot help him to overcome the burden of existence and his detached ironic attitude to death further qualify him as a forerunner of the existential Outsider. His self-loathing and the tension within him between the inner self and the role of avenger imposed on him reveal him as a self-estranged figure. The powerfully evocative imagery of disease and corruption that runs through the play expresses Hamlet's obsessive sense of disgust and world-weariness. This may be the Renaissance equivalent to the existential Outsider's nausea. However at the end of the play Hamlet transcends the disorienting experience of alienation. In this the humanism of the Elizabethan age with its Christian overtones may be seen as having helped him. Hamlet may therefore be considered as an estranged existential Outsider, who at the end through a leap of faith arrives at a providential vision of the universe, at which point his alienation is resolved.

There were certain elements in the Elizabethan background which were capable of generating a near-existential vision of the universe. In the Renaissance, the existing medieval interpretation of the universe in exclusively spiritual terms was questioned by sceptic thinkers like Montaigne and Machiavelli. Montaigne was to the Renaissance what Camus is to the twentieth century.[1] The gradual permeation of sceptical thought through the existing social and moral order created a state of intellectual ferment. Further the heavy toll of death caused by war and the other fell executioner, the Plague, together with the questioning of orthodox beliefs concerning life after death, made death a horribly fascinating topic of contemplation. The shadow of death loomed large over the intellectuals of the Elizabethan-Jacobean age. Medieval man had accepted death as a passage into eternal life from the world, which was only a testing ground for that life to come. But to Renaissance man, death spelt the end of all humanistic aspirations and was therefore a dreadful, loathsome and unwelcome visitor. The finality of death, its reduction of man to the quintessence of dust and a diet of worms, the ineluctable modality of existence and the transience of human greatness and glory were all related topics which preoccupied the intellectual, thus isolating him from his more active and less meditative brethren in their robust enjoyment of life in a humanistic era. This double perspective on life, viewing it with triumphant humanism and with horror because of the certainty of death, is uniquely Elizabethan and Jacobean. Out of this intellectual and philosophical background arose the quintessential Outsider in Elizabethan drama—Hamlet.

The problem of Hamlet has been considered earlier in existential terms by Kierkegaard,[2] who observes an ambiguity in the presentation of Hamlet as a religious hero and also an aesthetic one. Hamlet is shown to have religious scruples, but at the end carries out aesthetic revenge. Commenting on Kierkegaard's treatment of Hamlet, Martin Scofield says,

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[1] Cf. O.R. Oehri, "Authenticity in Montaigne and Camus," Ph.D. Thesis, *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 39, 10 (April, 1979), p. 6123A.

[2] Soren Kierkegaard, "A Side Glance at Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" in *Stages On Life's Way*, tr. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 409-411.

"Kierkegaard sees Hamlet as the type of the existential hero who cannot resolve the conflict between action and suffering and the conflict between action and thought." The play presents the state of being in "dread" in the Kierkegaardian sense, a state of anxiety, doubt, vacillation and awareness of possibilities before the decision for action is taken.[3] Recently S. Agajanian[4] has provided a Christian existential analysis of Hamlet in Kierkegaardian terms. The present paper finds Hamlet nearer allied to the Christian existential vision of the nineteenth century than to the atheistic existentialists of the twentieth century. But in the interpretation of Hamlet's condition in Act V a departure is made from Kierkegaard as will be shown in due course.

The origin of Hamlet's alienation may be traced to his father's death closely followed by his mother's second marriage, both of which together could be seen as a "boundary situation" which forced him to face the absurdity of existence. The finality of death which reduced a god-like father to nothing, not even a sorrowful memory to his widow, and the complete obliteration of a great man's memory at court within two months of his death brings home to Hamlet the vanity of human life and earthly power. His father's death plunges Hamlet into a contemplation of Death itself, which according to Camus is the ultimate evidence of the absurd.[5] The awareness of death perceived and expressed in intellectual terms brings Hamlet close to the existential hero. But the difference is that Hamlet's perspective on death changes continually, reflecting his own development from fragmentation to reintegration. This last point is elaborated later.

To Hamlet, his mother's speedy remarriage to Claudius seems absurd and defies reason. The "absurd" in existential philosophy is a relationship between the individual and the universe; it is the encounter between the individual's longing for order and a rational explanation and the absolute chaos and irrationality seen by him in the universe. Hamlet just cannot find a rational explanation for his mother's hasty remarriage and especially for her choice of Claudius after being married to the Elder Hamlet. Hamlet's self-torturing contemplation of his mother's remarriage and its irrationality leads him to an absurd vision of the world and therefore he toys with the idea of suicide as an escape from the burden of existence. In his first soliloquy these three stages in the logical sequence of thought appear in reverse order. First comes the death-wish, then a desolate view of the world and last of all appears the root-cause of alienation—his mother's remarriage.

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[3] Martin Scofield, *The Ghosts of Hamlet: The Play and Modern Writers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 95, 105.

[4] S. Agajanian, "The Problem of Hamlet: A Christian Existential Analysis," *Religion in Life* (Nashville, Tenn.), 46 (Summer 1977), 213-224.

[5] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, tr. Justin O'Brien (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), pp. 18-20.

> O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
> Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
> Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter.
>
> (1.2.129-32)[6]

At the heels of this comes a world-vision of futility which accounts for this suicidal yearning.

> O God, God,
> How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
> Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
> That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it merely.

This desolate vision of the world as a waste land is followed by a tortuously repetitive account of the immediate circumstance which precipitated his fall into abyssmal despair at the irrationality of things, namely, his mother's speedy remarriage. The speed rankles him. "But two months dead, nay not so much, not two," "yet within a month," "a little month," "most wicked speed." The total irrationality of her action as seen by him is conveyed through a contrast with a beast.

> O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
> Would have mourned longer.

There seems to be an inhuman essence exuding from her. This hasty remarriage seems inexplicable when viewed in the light of the visible love and devotion that had existed between his parents. Not only the speed but also the choice of Claudius strikes him as being utterly unaccountable by any rational standard. The antithetical portraits which he draws of his father as an idealised Hyperion and of his uncle as a Satyr, a symbol of the bestial and the corrupt, convey the confrontation between his longing for an ideal order which is projected on to the past and to a dead and God-like father, and his realization of the actual chaos and corruption in present existence which is crystallised for him in the figure of his uncle.

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[6] All quotations are from *Hamlet*, ed. J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1934).

Each of the three themes in this thought-sequence recurs again in the play. The thought of suicide reappears as a contemplation on existence and non-existence in the later soliloquy "To be, or not to be." The note of world-weariness is sounded again and worked up to a climax in the presence of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in 2.2.299-312. Here Man is reduced to being the quintessence of dust, while earth and air are a sterile promontory and a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. The contrast between his father and Claudius which makes Gertrude's choice irrational in his eyes is further elaborated by Hamlet in his interview with his mother in 3.4. 53-71: "Look here, upon this picture and on this." This is not merely the "presentment" of two brothers but an image of man's encounter with the absurd when his longing for an ideal order ruled by reason meets with the apparent reality of chaos and irrationality. Only this deep metaphysical implication of the mother's action can account for his overwhelming disgust towards life. Otherwise it would indeed appear as if the emotion was in excess of the facts as they appear, as T.S. Eliot suggests.[7] In the case of the Outsider, his existential disgust will almost always appear to be in excess of the facts because it cannot be adequately explained by the external circumstances. Thus while his father's death leads him to a contemplation of Death, his mother's remarriage seems to be an image of irrationality. Together they form the "boundary situation" which compels a confrontation with the absurdity of existence.

When human consciousness is thus crushed under the weight of existence, it may become a prey to ennui. Convinced that all the uses of the world are "unprofitable," the individual is overcome by a sense of futility and becomes incapable of meaningful and decisive action. The Elizabethan concept of melancholy finds its equivalent in the ennui of the modern alienated intellectual. Hamlet's melancholy and despair have something of this ennui which makes him indecisive and inactive. At this critical juncture the Ghost appears and imposes a task on him, the carrying out of which would demand playing a role altogether alien to him. There is a tension in Hamlet between the role of avenger imposed on him and his inner self which is overpowered by a sense of the futility of all action. Laertes is drawn as a deliberate contrast to Hamlet in that he sweeps to his revenge and enlists the support of the people, thus highlighting Hamlet's inability to believe in both individual and collective endeavour. Erik Erikson describes this enforcement of a role on Hamlet in psychological terms. He sees Hamlet as a youth forced to assume the negative identity of a mad revenger. But Hamlet's experience of world-weariness and futility makes it difficult for him to be convinced beyond doubt that an act of revenge would restore order and significance to life. While Orestes in Sartre's *Flies* takes upon himself the task of ridding the city of pollution which is incarnate in the murderer-usurper, Hamlet is reluctant to assume the responsibility of cleansing the age's corruption as personified in Claudius. The tension between the imposed role of revenger and the inner self generates self-estrangement in Hamlet.[8]

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[7] *Selected Essays*, 3rd enlarged edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1981). p. 145,

Besides this, there is also a gulf between the self-image as one capable of sweeping to his revenge "with wings as swift/As meditation or the thoughts of love" and his real self which avoids action because of a fundamental disbelief in the effectiveness of any definite corrective action. When this gap becomes apparent to him and he finds that he is unable to live up to his self-image, he resorts to self-condemnation. This happens notably in two soliloquies, 2.2 553-609 ("O what a rogue and peasant slave am I") and 4.4. 32-66 ("How all occasions do inform against me"). The intensity of self-loathing expressed in 2.2 is brought under control in 4.4 where self-criticism is carried out at the intellectual level of argument. Self-condemnation conveys self-division and self-alienation. Thus Hamlet's self-estrangement is dramatically demonstrated through the tension between role and inner self, through the gulf between self-image and the real self and through bitter self-criticism.

As a release from the inner tension caused by the confrontation of opposites, Hamlet resorts to clowning. The delirious hilarity in the "cellarage" scene is a kind of safety-valve mechanism. The unresolvable conflict between his own existential vision of absurdity and the ghost's call to the definite action of revenge drives him to seek relief in hysterical clowning. In the play-scene exchange with Ophelia he makes ribald jests on women and sex. What hurts most and is a cause of anguish is turned into a subject for grotesque mockery. Hamlet's clowning as a release from inner tension and anguish anticipates the use of clowning in modern drama as a release from the metaphysical anguish which accompanies the apprehension of absurdity.

In Hamlet, anguish is also released through a cruel irony seen in his savage speeches to Ophelia in the Nunnery scene. His indifference to and callous comments on the deaths of Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern reduce death to a matter of no importance, an attitude consistent with his world-view that finds life meaningless, "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable." This aspect of cruelty in Hamlet is recalled while studying a later existential hero like Camus's Caligula. Cruelty and a savage humour are Caligula's way of dealing with the absurdity of existence. In Hamlet both clowning and cruelty are used as a release from anguish.

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[8] Erik Erikson, *Identity : Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), pp. 236-240.

To trace Hamlet's changing perspective on death is to follow his development from fragmentation to reintegration. Hamlet's thoughts on death and the effect of the death of others on him reveal an evolving attitude towards death. At the beginning of the play his father's death draws him towards a contemplation of Death and makes him aware of the nothingness which swallows man after death so that he does not even survive in the memory of others. This is a matter of anguish in his first soliloquy, but is brought under control through irony in 3.2.128-31:

> O heavens, die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year, but by'r lady a' must build churches then . . . .

Thoughts of death and what happens after death preoccupy him almost throughout the play. His very first soliloquy, as we have seen, begins with a desire for self-annihilation which arises from a world-weariness which views life as being meaningless and absurd. "Self-slaughter" becomes a matter for further contemplation in 3.1.56-88. The pros and cons of death are viewed here dialectically. The fascination of death lies in the release it offers from all the sufferings and burdens of a weary life. " 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished." But the fear of the unknown after death terrifies man. The attitude to death in this soliloquy is therefore the ambivalent one of horror-fascination. The helplessness of man becomes clear to Hamlet. Man must either suffer the ills of life or face something worse after death, which, being unknown, is all the more fearful. Whichever course he may choose, he is the victim of the cruel human predicament. The more he contemplates such issues, the more is he convinced of the futility of all action.

With the killing of Polonius, death takes on a grotesque aspect for Hamlet. This death which takes place unpremeditatedly under a misapprehension, seems to confirm Hamlet's view of the absurdity of existence. The tone of casual irony with which he drags the corpse to a hiding-place could only arise out of a *Weltanschauung* which finds life meaningless and futile and therefore regards death as a macabre joke (3.4.212-15). This attitude has something in common with Meursault's indifference and irony in viewing death.[9] Hamlet's jesting becomes more and more bizarr as the search for the body intensifies. The bantering tone in which th conversion of the human body into dust is dealt with and the gruesom fantasy of Polonius "at supper," "not where he eats, but where 'a is eaten," are examples of an attempt to come to terms with the absurdity of deat by the use of the grotesque. All human endeavour is seen to be finall a preparation for the worm's table: "your worm is your only emperor for diet, we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots' (4.3.21-22). The reduction of the king, his father, to nothing by deatl had been his first intimation of the absurdity of human existence. Bu now he is able to distance himself from the fact which had caused him existential anguish. He views with sardonic relish the progress of a king through the guts of a beggar. The grotesque is used here as a release from the absurd.

In Act 5, in the grave-yard, Hamlet's tone is one of compassionate irony at the contrast between the present condition of the skull which is knocked about and the past dignity of the politician, courtier or lord to whom it had once belonged. The reference to the "worm" is still there, but there is sympathy for the human predicament. "Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with 'em? mine ache to think on't." His empathy is such that he can now identify with an unknown person's skull and feel pain at the callous treatment meted out to it. Laertes's behaviour at Ophelia's burial briefly provokes Hamlet and he out-Herods Herod in ranting in a mixed tone of fury and irony. But he finally emerges from this mood, in calm of mind, all passion spent, as he tells Laertes,

> What is the reason that you use me thus?
> I loved you ever, but it is no matter.
>
> (5.1.284-287)

In general, Hamlet's attitude to death in the grave-yard reveals compassion and control. Between Hamlet's departure from Denmark and his return a remarkable change has taken place in him.

Hamlet's conversation with Horatio in 5.2 gives us an inkling into the nature of the change that had taken place in Hamlet during his brief absence from Denmark. He has begun to see the shaping hand of divinity in his life.

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.
>
> (5.2.10-11)

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[9] Albert Camus, *The Outsider*, tr. Stuart Gilbert (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1946), p. 126.

This passage reveals the belief that nothing happens without reference to God's ultimate Providence. At the same time man's capacity to "rough-hew" things is also not lost sight of. This almost Augustinian view of events in this world as a balance between divine will and human action is something new to Hamlet. Here Hamlet has arrived at what Kierkegaard would call "the religious stage of life." He has reached this through a leap of faith in a reason-transcending decision to believe in "divinity." Though the moment of the leap is not presented on stage, the transformation wrought in Hamlet after the leap is dramatically demonstrated. Hamlet's former vision of an absurd and random mechanism is now replaced by belief in the Providential ordering of existence. It is this which restores meaning to life; not only life in the universe in general, but every individual's life is seen to be planned by a "special Providence" which cares even for sparrows. The fragmented world is reintegrated in his vision after the leap of faith. This new attitude is expressed in a passage resonant with gospel allusion.[10]

> We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come—if it be not to come, it will be now—if it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all (5.2.217-20).

Here Hamlet disregards omens and premonitions and chooses to rest in faith in God. He makes it clear that his faith is not superstition, fatalism, or nihilism.[11] It is a positive faith which sees and accepts the guiding and shaping hand of providence in everything because it believes in God's concern even for a single sparrow. He no longer has any fear or anxiety because he knows that he is "of more value than many sparrows." Hence Hamlet is able to view the possibility of his own death with equanimity. Whether the moment of death is "now" or is yet "to come" he is ready to accept it. This calm detachment and the acceptance of his own death at the time ordained by Providence is a far cry from the neurotic death-wish in the first soliloquy or the fear of unknown modes of being after death expressed in "To be, or not to be." This new attitude to death could arise only from a new integrated approach to life itself.

When death finally overtakes Hamlet, he regards it as "felicity" and does not fear the unknown any longer. His last action is to seize the poisoned cup from Horatio's hand and dash it to the ground, thus affirming life and disapproving of suicide.[12] While earlier he expressed a suicidal wish but feared what came after death (both being negative attitudes towards life and death), here he prevents suicide thus affirming life and at the same time accepts his own death (both being positive attitudes towards life and death). Thus a study of Hamlet's attitudes to death in general and his response to the death of particular people illuminates the development of Hamlet from fragmentation to integration.

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[10] Matthew 10:29: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

[11] I disagree with the criticism of Hamlet's stance at this point as found in Bradley, Knights and Scofield. cf. A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1941), p. 145; L.C. Knights, *An Approach to Hamlet* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), p. 89; Martin Scofield, p. 102 (n. 3 above).

Hamlet's reintegration is to the Christian humanist universe. It is here that Hamlet moves away from the atheistic existential framework. The existential hero has no props or traditions with which he can bolster up his individual stance. While in modern existential and absurdist drama the absurd vision prevails till the end, in Hamlet the providential vision of the universe and the acceptance of humanistic ideals reintegrate the Outsider to his universe. Hamlet's dying request to Horatio to tell his story to the world reveals his concern about his good name after death and his desire to be thought well of by his countrymen. Kierkegaard in his fierce individualism regarded it as a weakening on the part of Hamlet to desire the understanding and recognition of the community in which he lived.[13] The insistence on the vertical relationship between man and God to the exclusion of the horizontal dimension of man's communication with his fellowmen is precisely the most serious weakness in Kierkegaard's philosophy.[14] Here Hamlet's wish to be understood shows that he has arrived at the stage of "being-for-others" and no longer wants to be an alien in his society. Hamlet's reintegration thus includes two elements which may be generalised as a belief in a Reality which transcends the individual and gives meaning to the individual's existence and the individual's need to belong to a community where he is accepted. For Hamlet, these two elements were present in a pre-existing system, whereas modern man has to search through a heap of broken images to find the fragments and refashion them or recreate them for himself. Through personal questing and experience he has to rediscover the sense of Providence and Community.

In *Hamlet* the presence of the Outsider figure and the theme of alienation modify the traditional dramatic structure. In traditional revenge tragedy the main action is revenge and it falls within a generalized pattern of crime, discovery of the criminal, the avenger's plan of counter-action, the execution of revenge and the avenger's death.[15] In plays like *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Antonio's Revenge* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* the protagonist's faculties and efforts are all concentrated on and directed towards revenge. But when the theme of alienation and the Outsider figure intersect, the revenge plot, as in *Hamlet*, is subverted. It takes a secondary position and appears intermittently. It is Hamlet's existential concern as an Outsider that prevents him from being completely submerged in the bloodthirsty role of revenger. The line of action is continually diverted from revenge towards the philosophical speculations of an Outsider. These digressions give the impression of a rambling structure to the play. The Outsider's preoccupation with existential questions is at variance with a premeditated plan of action for the taking of revenge. In the midst of his verbal outpourings, Hamlet has to constantly remind himself of this action that is expected of him. There is a zig-zag movement of brief spurts of activity alternating with long spells of inaction. Thus when the Outsider is placed within the revenge structure, the action moves desultorily; it is subordinated to the Outsider's existential concerns.

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[12] Helen Gardner, *The Business of Criticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 49 points out the contrast between Hamlet's first soliloquy which regrets God's canon against self-slaughter and his last action in snatching the poison from Horatio.

[13] Soren Kierkegaard, *Authority and Revelation*, p. 154, cited by Martin Scofield, pp. 95-96 (n. 3 above).

[14] Cf. Margaret Chatterjee, *The Existential Outlook* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), p. 20.

The theme of alienation modifies the nature of the dramatic conflict. In the traditional revenge play the conflict is between the criminal and the avenger, as for example in *The Spanish Tragedy*. In *Hamlet* the total alienation of the Outsider figure at the various levels turns the struggle into a one-versus-all situation. Hamlet becomes the sole combatant (except for Horatio) in a multipronged battle against Claudius whose arm is strengthened by Gertrude, Ophelia, Polonius, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Laertes, against the corruption and dissolution of the court and the Elsinorean way of life and against the absurd in human existence. It is not a pitched battle or headlong conflict but is spread throughout the play.

The extensive use of soliloquy in *Hamlet* is a structural device necessitated by the alienation. The soliloquy is not used here as in earlier Elizabethan plays, to further the action and to inform the audience of secret plans. Instend it is used, mainly, as a vehicle of self-analysis and self-revelation by the protagonist. An analysis of the soliloquies reveals the alienation of the Outsider at various levels and his response to the absurd situation in which he finds himself. The first soliloquy expresses Hamlet's alienation from the human predicament and a desire to escape through suicide. In the second soliloquy which breaks out immediately after the ghost's revelation, Hamlet's disorientation seems complete. Here he make his fateful decision to subordinate everything else to the role of avenge imposed on him by the ghost. His inability to put this into immediat practice leads to further alienation—an estrangement from self. In th third soliloquy Hamlet heaps abuse on himself on realising the gulf bet ween his earlier self-image as one who would sweep to his revenge on swif wings and his actual incapacity to do so. He finds release in revengeful words rather than in action. He has enough self-awareness to realise thi and rebukes himself. He recalls himself only to lose himself again in meta physical doubts about the ghost's origin. Hamlet's fourth soliloquy, hi most famous one, on which to a large extent rests his reputation as a intellectual who loses himself in philosophical speculations and render himself incapable of action, contains the extended dialectic on existenc and then on death which gives a visible manifestation of how the activ role of revenger may be subordinated to the anxious questionings of a alienated individual groping in the midst of uncertainties:

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[15] Cf. Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy—1587-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 62-63; also Jackson G. Barry, *Dramatic Structure* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 208.

> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.

The fifth soliloquy expresses the intention of revenge verbally but fails t carry it out in action. The speculative note in "Now might I do it pat' reveals the sub-conscious disinclination for present action. In the las soliloquy, as in the third, he tries to goad himself on to revenge by con trasting himself with another:

> How all occasions do inform against me,
> And spur my dull revenge!

Characteristically this is followed by a disquisition on the purpose o human existence, man's place in the universe and what differentiates him from animals. Again he wonders why he has not carried out the duty o revenge imposed on him. Self-condemnation is followed by a renewed resolution to take revenge. When Hamlet returns as an integrated indivi dual in Act 5, having acquired a providential vision of life which gives meaning to existence, it is significant that *there are no more soliloquies* Perhaps with the end of alienation, there is no more need to soliloquize.

The last scene is singularly lacking in linguistic signs of alienation in Hamlet. There is no use of irony or satire as distancing devices. Even his parody of Osric is good-humoured and no longer smacks of a dis affection from other human beings. The melodic cadence of the penulti mate speech expresses the integrated personality's desire to be reconciled to and reinstated within his milieu.

> O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
> Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
> To tell my story.

Hamlet no longer stands in proud isolation from a corrupt universe but wants his actions to be understood and his name redeemed. He has reached the stage of being-for-others which is a sign of de-alienation.

Thus Hamlet may be regarded as an early anticipation of the existential Outsider who reflects on the universal concerns of man regarding existence, being and nothingness, and experiences estrangement and disgust. His contemplation of his father's death fills him with anguish, a natural reaction arising from a confrontation with Nothingness; his mother's remarriage seems to be an image of irrationality. These two events form the boundary situations which precipitate him into an absurd vision of existence in the universe. His melancholy and disgust are the equivalents of the modern existential Outsider's ennui and nausea. Hamlet's self-estrangement is enacted as a tension between role and inner self, self-image and real self and these find verbal expression as bitter self-criticism. Hamlet resorts to both clowning and cruelty as a release from anguish. But while a modern existential hero makes the acceptance of absurdity and alienation itself a rebellion, Hamlet is able to transcend his unnerving experience of alienation by being re-integrated to the Christian-humanistic universe.

Hamlet and the Integrity of Majesty

JANET S. HERTZBACH

Given Aristotle's dictum that we must define a thing by reference to its general and particular traits, we can increase our understanding of Hamlet's task and his resultant dilemma through examining, as he does, what Denmark has lost through the elder Hamlet's untimely death: a sense of the wholeness and potency of majesty In an aphoristic style that would have done credit to Polonius, Rosencrantz describes the "cess of majesty" in general terms, emphasizing the perceptible dependence of the realm's component subjects upon the king:

> The cess of majesty
> Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
> What's near it with it. Or it is a massy wheel
> Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
> To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
> Are mortis'd and adjoin'd, which when it falls,
> Each small annexment, petty consequence,
> Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone
> Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.[1]
>
> (3.3.15-23)

Notwithstanding that Rosencrantz is energetically making love to Claudius's employment as he offers these precepts, we nevertheless perceive the foundation in orthodox Tudor political doctrine upon which they rest.

On the abstract merits of this argument, however inelegantly stated, as they describe the metaphysical architecture of the kingdom, Hamlet would have been sure to agree. In his last substantial conversation with Horatio, prior to Osric's appearance, he tacitly adds the accepted corollary: the king himself must fulfill his obligation to obey the law in order to constitute a firm base to which the parts of the realm might be "mortis'd and adjoin'd."[2] The prince enumerates Claudius's crimes in a legalistic manner that suggests an aggregate offence against the state, and he speaks no longer of revenge but of justly forestalling continued flagrant villainy:

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[1] All quotations are from *The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

> He that hath kill'd my king and whor'd my mother,
> Popp'd in between th'election and my hopes,
> Thrown out his angle for my proper life
> And with such coz'nage—is't not perfect conscience
> To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damn'd
> To let this canker of our nature come
> In further evil?
>
> (5.2.64-70)

Hamlet has experienced much grief and perplexity when he makes this audit of Claudius's transgressions, yet now, late in the action, the "cess of majesty" simply occupies the first position in the list rather than bearing the full weight of incomprehension and despair which Shakespeare assigns to Hamlet in Act I.[3] There Hamlet speaks not merely of cessation, but of a profound loss which has impoverished Denmark and him. A significant indication of the magnitude of this loss comes among his first words to the Ghost:

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[2] For discussion of the orthodoxy that the king is bound by the law, see C.H. and K. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961). For contemporary statements on the contractual nature of the relationship between ruler and ruled, see, among others, Sir John Fortescue, *De Laudibus Legum Angliae* (c. 1468-71). ed. and trans. S.B. Chrimes (1942; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1949), p. 41; Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), trans. Lester K. Born (1936; rpt. New York: Norton, 1968), p. 180; Sir Thomas Starkey, *Dialogue Between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset* (1536-38), ed. Kathleen M. Burton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), p. 45. Both Starkey in his tract (p. 167) and Sir Thomas Smith in *De Republica Anglorum* (c. 1565, publ. 1583) articulate the theory of king-in-parliament, which, as Smith states, means that in the sovereign legislative body of parliament, every Englishman is present from the monarch to the lowest person: "And the consent of parliament is taken to be every man's consent," ed. L. Alston (1906), rpt. in *Complaint and Reform in England 1436-1714*, ed. W.H. Dunham (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938), p. 223. In *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (VIII. ii. 9; c. 1597-1600), Richard Hooker declares that "...kings, even inheritors, do hold their right to the power of dominion, with dependency upon the whole entire body politic over which they rule as kings . . . ." *Works*, 7th ed., ed. J. Keble (Oxford: Clarendon, 1874), III, 359.

[3] See Arthur Kirsch, "Hamlet's Grief," *ELH*, 48 (1981), 17-36, for an exploration of the etiology and course of Hamlet's suffering.

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane. O answer me.
(1.4.40-45)

Playgoers and readers have rightly celebrated Hamlet for his appreciation of nuance and range in human affairs and for his powers of articulation. The Ghost might be any of the entities he suggests, or all of them. The vocative expression "Hamlet, / King, father, royal Dane" exemplifies the tremulous, interrogative cast of Hamlet's mind as he seeks to discover the local habitation and name of this extraordinary phenomenon that, before speaking a word, has already touched his soul's deepest recesses.[4]

In its alternating, ritualistic evocation of the dead monarch's private and public names, Shakespeare also causes Hamlet's salutation to work as a digest of the particulars of the integrity of majesty and, therefore, as an anatomy of its tight orbit. Names, "Hamlet" and "father," intermingle with office, "King" and "royal Dane." By its sequential structure, the greeting paradoxically signifies unity. It calls up the ideals of the symbiotic amalgamation of the individual into the whole, of the enrichment of the whole by the individual, of the virtual coalescence of the king's body natural and body politic, of the quintessence of reciprocity actualized at the pinnacle of the realm: all that has deserted Denmark through the elder Hamlet's death and Claudius's succession to the throne. In all of these ideals, the principle of contractualism, one of the staples of Renaissance political thought, implicitly provides a stabilizing factor based upon the cooperation of monarch and subjects, through the passage of time, for the general benefit of the land.[5]

Additionally, the salutation figures the wide scope of the shock, protest, and denial that envelops Hamlet's psyche when we first meet him. By invoking the wholeness, the integrity, of majesty, Hamlet simultaneously indicts the fragmentation that now appears prevalent in the kingdom. At this early point, Hamlet perceives this fragmentation to be a function of the rulership of his uncle: because he is not Hamlet's father, Claudius is intrinsically inadequate in both the public and private spheres. The salutation, then, also acts as a sort of thematic barometer of majesty, telling us both how low Denmark has fallen and how exalted it formerly was.[6]

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[4] See Maynard Mack, "The World of Hamlet," *The Yale Review*, 41 (1952), 502-523, for an analysis of the interrogative mood as consequence of the mysteriousness that permeates Denmark as the play opens, as well as for a widely ranging discussion of Hamlet's intellectual capacity.

[5] On the "two bodies" theory, see the classic study of Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957).

Examples of this mood of antithesis—of wholeness and emptiness, of strength and corruption—have been noted in a variety of critical contexts and are, of course, not far to seek. Act I is bounded by the apprehension and dislocation that mark the conversation of Barnardo and Francisco upon the ramparts at the beginning and also Hamlet's bitter, despairing lament at the end: "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,/That ever I was born to set it right" (1.5.196-197). Hamlet's cry denotes a horrid contrast between past and present and, by unspoken extension, asserts that the monarchy, fractured through the fratricide and incest which the Ghost has revealed to him, provides nothing to which anything can be mortised or adjoined. The first appearance of the Ghost, armored and frowning, inspires Horatio to relate the history of the elder Hamlet's martial successes against the Polacks and old Fortinbras. Taken in conjunction with the prince's tortured recollection in his first soliloquy (1.2.139-145) of his parents' blissful marriage, we see that Shakespeare portrays the dead king as a Hyperion in both the public and private spheres. To be a Hyperion is to illuminate one's entire world through the substance of majestic wholeness: "A was a man, take him for all in all," concludes his grieving son (1.2.187).

In Hamlet's current world, on the contrary, the dark and bloat Claudius embodies the extent to which Denmark has been broken and maimed. In his initial appearance in the court scene, the bravura display of administrative authority and efficiency is adulterated by a subtle undercurrent of forced, expedient reconciliation—a tense assay at harmony—that pervades his first address as it does his subsequent overtures to Laertes, Polonius, and Hamlet. He says to the eagerly acquiescent courtiers, for example,

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[6] The prince's concern with the integrity of majesty finds alternative expression in D.G. James's assertion in *The Dream of Learning* "that the play of *Hamlet* has for its soul and centre a passionate and deeply reflective concern with the problem of conduct . . ." (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), p. 58. All of Hamlet's soliloquies certainly deal with the permutations of this problem. In regard to Hamlet's early conviction, before the Ghost's revelations, of Claudius's inadequacy, it is appropriate to note that in *The Politics* (IV. x), Aristotle defines the third type of tyranny as rule by an inferior, " . . . where a single person governs men, who are all his peers or superiors, without any form of responsibility, and with a view to his own advantage rather than that of his subjects," trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), p. 179. In *Killing the King: Three Studies in Shakespeare's Tragic Structure* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), Maynard Mack, Jr. contends that Shakespeare argues that "time qualifies all" (p. 93), that the "chivalric form of statecraft" (p. 77) which the elder Hamlet exemplified has been replaced by the Claudian ethic that power takes precedence over honor.

> Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
> Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state,
> Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,
> With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
> With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
> In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
> Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barr'd
> Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
> With this affair along.
>
> (1.2.8-16)

This pressure towards resolution resounds with superficiality because Claudius attempts to accommodate, and in so doing actually to negate, the obvious, intransigent paradoxes that stigmatize his marriage to Gertrude. His glibness achieves tonal concurrence with Polonius's advice to Laertes, informed by the conviction that what matters most about a man is the carefully crafted appearance of discretion that he offers for the world's inspection. A marked adversarial, defensive quality permeates the essence of sovereignty and of its supporting sage counsel now ascendant in Denmark: "Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;/Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment . . ." (1.3.68-69).

In setting Reynaldo to spy upon Laertes in Paris, Polonius effectively proposes that his man make war upon his son's reputation, with the coy caveat that the faults be adumbrated only as the "taints of liberty" (2.1.32), born of youth and energy. Knowing, with Hamlet, of the features of the Ghost's tale of woe and having heard the prince's accusations against the dissipated court life at Elsinore, we recognize that Denmark's present king is not presumptively guilty merely of fratricide but also of the lesser offenses of drabbing and drinking. Claudius will demonstrate his interest in fencing, another item on Polonius's list of indiscretions which Reynaldo might impute to Laertes, on a subsequent and more urgent occasion.

As this ethic of antithesis, of fragmentation and of loss, contaminates the public sphere in Denmark, so has it almost literally infected the private scene since Claudius iterated the sin of Cain. In that regard, we need to reconsider first the Ghost's original account of the murder. The "cursed hebanon," administered through the kingly ear that had, no doubt, often enjoyed the agreeable unction of Claudius's obsequious words,

> . . . with a sudden vigour it doth posset
> And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
> The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine,
> And a most instant tetter bark'd about,
> Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust
> All my smooth body.
> Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
> Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatch'd,
> Cut off even in the blossom of my sin . . . .
>
> (1.5.68-76)

Hamlet's answering grief and rage—"And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold, my heart, / And you, my sinews, grow not instant old, / But bear me stiffly up"—derive partially from the new violation of Eden figured in this betrayal in a garden. Because only hell could countenance such a deed, his only recourse, perhaps, must be to "couple hell" in order to vindicate his "nature" as a loyal son by retaliating against the perpetrator.

Additionally, we must not, for surely Hamlet does not, disregard the almost unimaginable physical shock and suffering which the old king endured in his dying moments, however briefly. The vile blisters and traumatic clotting of the blood transformed this vital exemplar of majesty into an inanimate, disfigured lump of clay, robbed completely of public function, "of crown," and of private fulfillment, "of queen," that composed the "life" of this king and this man, who was "all in all" to Denmark and to his son. Nor can we underestimate the effect on Hamlet of hearing, even elliptically, of the "sulph'rous and tormenting flames" (1.5.3) of the "prison-house" that confines his father's spirit by day. This realization that the radiant Hyperion, who once enriched his world, now exists simply as a passive object to be cleansed by purgatorial fire, only adds to Hamlet's burden of suffering because it strongly implies what the prince is not yet emotionally prepared to concede: if his father has come to this end, so must everyone.[7]

The memory that the elder Hamlet had been all in all to his wife also intensifies and refines Hamlet's pain. As he recalls, his father had been

[7] Thus we can readily agree with C.S. Lewis, who traces one motivation for Hamlet's hesitation "not to the physical fear of dying, but a fear of being dead," "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?" *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 28 (1942), 149.

> . . . so loving to my mother
> That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
> Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
> Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
> As if increase of appetite had grown
> By what it fed on . . . .
>
> (1.2.140-145)

Very probably Hamlet idealizes his parents' physical relationship because of his disgust at seeing his mother presently dote on Claudius. Even so, he retrospectively places his father's sexuality firmly within the gentle context of Christian *caritas*, a love that seeks, through the agency of its secure identity, incorporation with the object and the consequent well-being of the object over its own gratification.[8] Before his departure for England Hamlet's savage response to Claudius's soothing farewell, "Thy loving father, Hamlet" (4.3.53), reminds us of the nature of a true marriage as it also, through negative implication, bitterly attacks the inferior union to which his mother has now dedicated herself: Claudius, he says, is "My mother. Father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh; so my mother." Clearly, Claudius's wooing of the queen had been much like a pursuit after game or a martial siege of her wifely virtue.[9] As such, his primary interest consisted in displaying to himself, his most critical audience, his own virtuosity as a soldier of love. So does Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*, dismiss Petrarchan and courtly conventions. Armed, as the Ghost says, with the "witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts" (1.5.43), Claudius had won the readily wavering prize. He had only to wage war upon his brother's life to achieve a total conquest of Denmark.

Images of battle and commerce naturally, then, permeate the advice which Laertes and Polonius impose upon Ophelia on the question of Hamlet's suit for her love. Because he is subject to the needs of the state in choosing a wife, according to Laertes, sexual license offers Hamlet an inevitable outlet; therefore Ophelia must guard her "chaste treasure" against the prince's "unmaster'd importunity" (1.3.31,32). In an unwitting reference to Gertrude's hasty remarriage, which has established a new norm in such matters, Laertes denigrates Hamlet's professed love as "Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting, / The perfume and suppliance of

[8] St. Paul's admonition in I Corinthians 13 : 4-5 (Geneva) defines the character of charity : "Love suffreth long: it is bountiful: love envieth not: love doeth not boast itself: it is not puffed up: / It disdaineth not: it seketh not her owne things . . . ."

[9] I agree with the Arden editor (Longer Note to 1.5. 42, pp. 455-456) that Claudius and Gertrude commenced their guilty affair before the death of the king.

a minute, no more" (1.3.8-10). Polonius subsequently intensifies the images of war and commerce in his lecture to his daughter. As a *senex*, he can regard romantic love only through the distortion of the thick lens of years that constitutes his distance from any experience of it. Thus, he invests the images with an added aura of cynicism and menace:

> Think yourself a baby
> That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay
> Which are not sterling.
> (1.3.105-107)
>
> Set your entreatments at a higher rate
> Than a command to parley.
> (122-123)
>
> In few, Ophelia,
> Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers
> Not of that dye which their investments show,
> But mere implorators of unholy suits,
> Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds
> The better to beguile.
> (126-131)

Just as the temper of antithesis and fragmentation irradiates every facet of public concourse in Denmark, so does it corrupt the most intimate relationship between men and women. In Claudius's realm, the seeking of individual advantage possesses the ultimate sanction.

Whereas Laertes and Polonius concentrate upon the culpability of the male in the ongoing war between the sexes, Hamlet, obsessed with the almost incomprehensible action of his mother in marrying so quickly and so disastrously, concentrates upon the woman's part. He gives vent to his anger at woman's inconstancy in the nunnery scene and, in The Mousetrap, lards the inserted dialogue between the Player King and Player Queen with references to commerce and conflict, which presuppose the essential instability of emotional commitment that characterizes love in this renovated Denmark. The Player Queen vows,

> The instances, that second marriage move
> Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.
> A second time I kill my husband dead,
> When second husband kisses me in bed.
> (3.2.177-180)

The Player King sadly responds that in this changeable world, love simply cannot endure:

> And hitherto doth love on fortune tend . . . .
> So think thou wilt no second husband wed,
> But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

With the artifice of The Mousetrap and its confirmation, in Claudius's response, of the Ghost's tale of woe, Hamlet confronts his mother in her closet and gives to his shock, outrage, and protest their most frenzied expression. Wishing futilely that he could reject his mother as he has already purged Ophelia from his heart, he initiates his indictment of his mother's remarriage by demonstrating that he has not forgotten the physical horror of his father's death. His mother's deed, he rails, is

> Such an act
> That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
> Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
> From the fair forehead of an innocent love
> And sets a blister there . . . .
> (3.4.40-44)

Then, forcibly setting Gertrude to study the vast difference between her two husbands, Hamlet concentrates on the god-like and thus total potency of his father:

> See what a grace was seated on this brow,
> Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
> An eye like Mars to threaten and command,
> A station like the herald Mercury . . .
> Where every god did seem to set his seal
> To give the world assurance of a man.

Hamlet's vision of his father as a composition of the divine and the human accomplishes more than to draw the obvious contrast between the elder Hamlet and the paltry, ugly "satyr" who supplanted him. It also establishes the necessary remoteness of majesty, required to facilitate its overt expression and its resultant cohesive influence in the realm. In representing all men, the king must be like none of them; and the king's subjects must be able to recognize the distinction.[10] If the prince was, indeed, as Ophelia says, "Th'observ'd of all observers" (3.1.156), and there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of her encomium, then so was Hamlet's father universally observed, the paragon from whom everyone in Denmark—and most devastatingly Claudius—took their own measure.

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[10] In *The Cease of Majesty*, M.M. Reese comments that Shakespeare's concept of majesty is symbolized by the Crown, which is " . . . the higher self of every subject, calling him to great deeds and sacrifice" (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), p. 109.

Hamlet had viewed his father with awe both as sovereign and husband and had heard accounts of his wondrous martial exploits. The proportion which he posits in his first soliloquy, drawn from a maze of grief, indicates a too severe conviction of his own unworthiness that affiliates him with Claudius, "My father's brother—but no more like my father / Than I to Hercules" (1.2.152-153). On the contrary, his natural affinity is with his father's majesty, apparent in Ophelia's retrospective enumeration of his graces as courtier, soldier, and scholar and now, in his altered world, in his heroic quest to come to terms with its demands. Even as a young man, Hamlet had yet been a whole young man, with the promise, in the course of time, of following his father's example in becoming in all things his own man and separate from all others.

For Hamlet, then, the essence of his father's rule derived from the consistent, natural harmony of its facets of aspect, word, and deed, all dedicated to nourishing what was most positive in Denmark in the public, political and private, personal spheres and, therefore, enriching the land with its own grandeur. The majesty of the sovereign had coincided with the majesty of Denmark. In *The Governor* (1531), Sir Thomas Elyot suggests the simultaneously exemplary and reciprocal nature of majesty in a manner illuminating for students of *Hamlet*: ". . . the whole proportion and figure of noble estate . . . properly a beauty or comeliness in his countenance, language and gesture apt to his dignity, and accommodate to time, place, and company . . . ."[11]

In order to accomplish the task of revenge that the Ghost has assigned to him, and in so doing to act in Denmark's best interests, Hamlet must first retrieve for himself something of the positive, constructive ethos that prevailed when his father ruled. He must work through and thus conquer the negative emotions of protest, anger, and unworthiness that, as Kirsch has adduced, exemplify the condition of mourning which tortures and disables him during the first four acts.[12] On the journey to England, Hamlet accepts the features of his current world and works within these imposed limitations, and in his own behalf, because he must do so to survive. His discovery and alteration of Claudius's condemning missive, his summary sentence of death upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, his resourcefulness and bravery during the pirates' attack, and his purposeful return to Denmark all bespeak a man for whom aspect, word, and deed have come into unified focus.

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[11] II.ii. Ed. S.E. Lehmberg (London: Dent, 1962), p. 99.

[12] "Hamlet's Grief" (n. 3 above), p. 23.

Instead of thinking obsessively of the majesty that Denmark and he have lost, Hamlet now inhabits a mental domicile in which he can think of what he has gained—even if it is only more time to accomplish his task and the repose of mind that enables him to accept his world and his station and progress within it. If he has gained time, he also comprehends its potential more fully than he did previously when he was frantically bent on writing the prologue to everyone's play. His actions on the journey to England were the work of an instant; since he inadvertently killed Polonius, Hamlet has known that, in the longer term, he is assuredly doomed, that he will eventually join his father's spirit in purgatorial fire.[13] He also realizes, however, that death is the natural conclusion to life and that, as such, it comes only under God's "special providence." Ultimately, Hamlet accedes to God's design as it is expressed in time. As God ordained his birth on the day of his father's great victory over old Fortinbras, so will God fix the moment of his death: "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all" (5.2.216-218).

He has learned that while everyone must be ready to die, man's triumphs, as on his voyage to England, no less than man's ending day occur under God's comprehensive and shaping—and remote—majesty. If this divine integrity exists, then death is not a defeat but only an inevitable instance of human experience that lends proportion and articulation to those preceding it. In the graveyard scene, Hamlet muses on the democratic predicament of the politician, the courtier, the lawyer, Yorick, and Alexander, who lived only finally each to compose, perhaps, a convenient plug to stop a bunghole. If that was their fate, to enter a condition in which worldly distinctions are no longer relevant, then it is quite properly his father's and his own as well.

In a world of paradoxes, then, Hamlet becomes whole because, at last, he accepts the viability of the entire spectrum of possible human experience, and that includes betrayal and death. When he interrupts Ophelia's funeral with the ringing pronouncement "This is I, / Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.250-251), he demonstrates that he incorporates all of the public and private identities which, in his salutation to the Ghost, he had originally attributed to his father. He leaps into Ophelia's grave to prove, by risking his life, the principle that he had loved her, just as the elder Hamlet repeatedly hazarded his life in battle to confirm Denmark's glory. Through the confluence of his aspect, word, and deed in the fatal dueling scene—his generous and lucid expressions of regret and respect to Laertes, his superior swordsmanship, his performance of the task of revenge that rids the land of its Claudian pestilence, and his concern for the realm's renewed strength in his endorsement of the election of Fortinbras as king—Hamlet is "most royal." And, in his fleeting moments as the uncrowned king, the dying Hamlet restores the integrity of majesty to Denmark because he has affirmed its potent being in himself.

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[13] See Fredson Bowers, "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 740-749, and Mythili Kaul, "Hamlet and Polonius," *HSt*, 2 (Summer 1980), 21-22.

More Elements From Nashe

J.J.M. TOBIN

Strange Newes or *Four Letters Confuted* provided Shakespeare with some turns of phrase or pieces of diction unique in the canon for use in *Hamlet*. Although *Strange Newes* lacks the variety of *Pierce Penilesse*, it is especially interesting as the first complete engagement on the part of Nashe with Gabriel Harvey.

When Nashe writes in *Strange Newes* of how his enemies try in every line of *Pierce Penilesse* "to raise up a *Ghost*" (259), enemies who must "tye *knottes*" (259) with their tongues, he does so on the page on which he announces that he will in self-defense "stand darting of *quils* a while *like the Porpentine*" (259).[1] This diction re-appears in the meeting between the Ghost of Hamlet Sr. and the Prince in Act I, Sc. 5: "poor *ghost*," "*knotted* and combined locks" and "*like quills* upon *the* fearful *porpentine*." On the following page, Nashe writes of interpreters of his lines who derive irreverent meanings from them, "which a thousand deaths cannot make mee ere grant that I *dreamd off*" (260), and, with analogy, of certain foolish people who "may get *the glowworme* in the night and thinke to kindle *fire* with it, because it glistens so, but God wrote, they are beguiled, it proves in the end to be but fools *fire*" (260). Shakespeare has taken some of these words for the Ghost's concluding, "The *glow-worm* shows the matin to be near, / And gins to pale his uneffectual *fire*," and for Hamlet's indictment of Horatio for not being a proper interpreter, for not seeing that there are "more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are *dreamt of* in your philosophy." The overreading enemies of Nashe have given Hamlet a phrase for his literalist confidant, in a characteristic Shakespearean inversion of malleable source material.

In his complicating of the moral and psychological aspects of revenge Shakespeare found in the Nashe-Harvey quarrel just such a parallel example of stops and starts, hesitations and commitments to action as his princely protagonist demonstrates. The first of such imperfect commitments occurs at the end of Nashe's Epistle to the Reader in *Strange Newes*. After announcing that the fight has begun in earnest, Nashe writes of Richard Harvey's being "*revengd*" (262) on Nashe, but ineffectively for it is not his sword, but the empty scabbard of his "*contumelie*" (262) which strikes at Nashe. Nashe himself must decide between action and suffering, "*whether* am I in this case *to arme* myselfe against his intent of injurie, *or* sitte finger in my mouth, in hope *to bee* one of simplicities martyrs" (262-63). Some of this diction has found its way into the heavily Nashe-Harvey influenced fourth soliloquy with its reference to "the proud man's *contumely*" (3.1.70) and with its theme of action versus passivity structured by the syntax of "*whether* . . . *or*" (3.1.56, 58).[2] Some additional evidence that this particular page (262) was of special interest to Shakespeare exists in the reference to Gabriel's brother as a "Fencer," the role of Laertes in the fatal duel at the end of the play, one who tried to "*over-crow*" Nashe "with comparative tearmes." Nashe views any one Harvey as the agent of another, so that Shakespeare may easily have thought of Laertes the Fencer-agent of Claudius, and the death he brings to Hamlet by a poison which "quite *o'er-crows* [his] spirit" (5.2.353).

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[1] Page references in parenthesis for *Strange Newes* are to *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. R.B. McKerrow (1904-10; rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), I.

Two other sections of *Strange Newes* provided Shakespeare with diction for *Hamlet*. When the fencing match is about to begin, Hamlet apologizes for past wrongs he may have done to Laertes, explaining "That I have *shot* my arrow *o'er* the house / And hurt my *brother*" (5.2.243-44). Nashe in writing of Gabriel and his "*brother*" (268) judges that Gabriel "hath verie highly *overshotte* himselfe" (267).

When Nashe criticizes Gabriel for helping his brother Richard, he tells him that "thou hast *crackt* thy credit through *the ring*, made thy infamie *currant* as farre as the Queenes coyne goes" (269). Hamlet greets the boy actor who plays women's roles, presumably including queens', with the hope that his voice "like a piece of un*current* gold, be not *crack'd* within *the ring*" (2.2.427-28).

Richard, a divine, is taken to task for publishing the poor sermons he delivers in the pulpit, "the frothiest form of *Divinitie*" (270) ". . . which before he *rough-hewes* not over with his penne" (271). Hamlet cites "a *divinity*," not a divine, "that shapes our ends, / *Rough-hew* them how we will" (5.2.10-11). Nashe goes on to explain that Greene had attacked the Harveys because they had first attacked poets and playwrights associated with the anti-Martinists. Greene's attack itself was very brief (and inserted in only some copies of the text), "about *some* seven *or* eight *lines* it was which hath pluckt on an invective of so many leaves" (271). Hamlet, although doubling the number of lines, has a similarly brief composition which is to produce a great response from Claudius: "You could for a need study a speech of *some* dozen *or* sixteen *lines*, which I would set down and insert in it, could you not?" (2.2.540-43).

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[2] See my "Harvey and *Hamlet*," *American Notes and Queries*, 18 (February 1980), 86-7.

Later, Nashe will refer to a new book of Harvey's on the Paris Garden which will "tamper with the *interpreter* of *the Puppits*" (271). Hamlet, of course, crudely jokes with Ophelia during the Murder of Gonzago, "I could *interpret* between you and your love, if I could see *the puppets* dallying" (3.2.246-47).

Towards the end of his pamphlet Nashe writes of Harvey's fourth letter, one which Nashe believes had been in Harvey's desk drawer for a long time, at least Nashe is willing to wager his "*maydenhead*" (327). Harvey acts like a timid girl, he "*brides* it" (327), he cries out "*God dild you*" (327), and then shifting genders and ages, acts like a "*good* olde man" caught in a fire that "*hedgde* him in" (327). He is also like some "craftie ring-leader of *rebellion*" (327). Ophelia as she is about to sing of a girl who lost her maidenhead and the chance to be a bride, salutes Claudius with the phrase, unique in the canon, "*God dild you*" (4.5.42). Claudius refers to "*good* Polonius' death" (4.5.83), asks Laertes of his "*rebellion*" (4.5.122), and assures Gertrude that "there's such divinity doth *hedge* a king" (4.5.124).

Two pages later, Nashe blames Harvey for having slandered him with the result that "If I were by thee, I woulde *plucke thee by the beard* and spit *in* thy *face*" (329) for saying that he had committed "such abhominable *villanies*" (329). This follows some belaboring of Harvey for defending the ass as an author, and if Harvey agrees that Nashe holds "no author but the Asse, for all Authors are *Asses, why I am* for you" (328). Some of this diction has found its way into the third soliloquy (Act 2, Sc. 2) when Hamlet berates himself for his hesitation, thinks of anybody who might justly call him "*villain*," who *plucks* off his *beard* and blows it *in* his *face*, all before he catches himself in the midst of his verbal self-indulgence with the rueful, "*Why*, what an *ass am I*."

Finally, Nashe warns Harvey to "have an eie to *maine*-chaunce" (330), refers to his own "small *power*" (331), speaks of the trick of the rising of "*an eggshell*" (331), of other "*tricks*" (331) of "our *souldiors*" (331), and of Harvey's books "gone *to bed*, that is where they lie *dead*" (332). Hamlet uses some of this diction in his querying of the Norwegian captain (Act 4, Sc. 4) and in his consequent soliloquy, "whose *powers* are these?" the *main* of Poland," "*an egg-shell*," "the imminent *death*," "*trick* of fame" and "*to* their graves like *beds*." The pamphlet war has given its diction to the large conflict between Norway and Poland as Shakespeare, carefully studying the responses of both Harvey and Nashe to affronts and responses, extrapolates from personal struggle to national strife.

One other element from *Have With You to Saffron-walden* deserves particular attention, and that in terms of Polonius's speech of explanation to the king and queen of true madness, a speech already influenced by elements from *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem.* In the dialogue Nashe develops the theme of the Harvey family's humble origins in rope-making. With affected seriousness he has one of his interlocutors, Domino Bentivole, point out that although the ropes made by the Harveys are sometimes used in the course of criminal acts, the Harveys are not therefore guilty of any crimes themselves. Then Pierce Penilesse, the Respondent in this dialogue, makes some astute observations on the differences between cause and effect. In its rhythm and subject of logical tautology, with the added issue of insanity, this passage made up the rhythm of Polonius's analysis of Hamlet's lunacy.

> As though the cause and the effect (more than the superficies and the substance) can bee seperated, when in manie things *causa sine qua non* is both the cause and the effect, the common distinction of *potentia non actu* approving it selfe verie crazed and impotent herein since the premisses necessarily beget the conclusion, and so contradictorily the conclusion the premisses: a halter including desperation, and so desperation concluding in a halter; without which fatall conclusion and privation it cannot truly bee termed desperation, since nothing is said to bee till it is borne, and despaire is never fully borne till it ceaseth to bee, and hath depriv'd him of beeing that first bare it and brought it forth. So that herein it is hard to distinguish which is most to be blamed, of *the cause or the effect*; *the Cause* without the *effect* beeing of no *effect*, and *the effect* without *the cause* never able to have been (59-60).[3]

Carneades, another of the interlocutors, urges the Respondent to continue with the life story of Gabriel Harvey and hopes that there will be no interruption:

> Better or worse fortune, I pry thee let us heare how thou goest forward with describing the Doctor and his life and fortunes: and you, my fellow Auditors, I beseech you, trouble him not (anie more) with these impertinent Parentheses (60).

Polonius is eager to describe the crazed desperation of Hamlet, interupting and delaying his narrative by parenthetical pieces of self-criticism. His most comical lines are those devoted to premises which necessarily beget conclusions, "for to define madness, / What is it but to be nothing else but mad," and to much play on the relationship of cause and effect:

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[3] References for *Have With You to Saffron-walden* are to McKerrow, III.

> Mad let us grant him then, and now remains
> That we find out *the cause* of this *effect*,
> Or rather say, *the cause* of this defect,
> For this *effect* defective comes by *cause*.
>
> (2.2. 100-03)

The Unfortunate Traveller, the best known of Nashe's works to modern readers, was the least valuable to Shakespeare in the composition of *Hamlet*. Of course, it was outside the Harvey-Nashe quarrel, but unlike *The Terrors of the Night*, also free from references to the struggle with the Harveys, it had no dominant concern such as the legitimacy of spirits with which to capture Shakespeare's imagination.

Nevertheless there are some elements from the "novel" which have been incorporated into the tragedy and at least one moral topic, revenge, which must have caught Shakespeare's attention, for a piece of its diction seems to have become part of Hamlet's description of his rôle.

Jack Wilton uses the phrase "*hugger-mugger*" (213), an expression often used by Nashe elsewhere in his works, and the word "*pol-axe*" in a description of the compensatory strength of the lion, whose "pawes are as good to him as a *pol-axe* to knocke downe anye that resist him" (221).[4] "Mount *Ossa* and *Peleon*" (236) are mentioned again, although not with the supporting diction which is found in *The Terrors of the Night*, as are "*Wittenberg*" (246), and "*Luthers* part in banishing the masse" (246), but nothing of the diet of Würms, and a magnificos wife is sheltered and protected but "had *mettall* inough in her to make a good wit of" (261). These expressions are paralleled in the burial of Polonius, "*hugger-mugger*" (4.5.84), and King Hamlet's "*Pole-axe*" which he smote on the ice (1.1.63); Laertes cites "*Pelion*" (5.1.253) and Hamlet "*Ossa*" (5.1.283); "*Wittenberg*" (1.2.113 and elsewhere) is the university of Hamlet and Horatio, and, historically, other Danes, and, theatrically, Doctor Faustus; while Ophelia, imperfectly sheltered and protected, has or is "metal more attractive" (3.2.109).

More interesting for Shakespeare's concern with revenge is the clear statement by the revenger Cutwolfe, "Revenge in our tragedies is continually raised from hell: of hell doe I esteeme better than heaven, if it afford me revenge" (324), the first half of which view Hamlet is concerned with, while the second is gladly embraced by Laertes. When brought to execution for his vengeful murder of the bandit-rapist Esdras, Cutwolfe insists that "the farther we wade in revenge, the neere come we to the throne of the almightie. To his scepter it is properly ascribed; his scepter he lends unto man, when he lets one man *scourge* an other" (326). So Cutwolfe immediately after the description of the killing of Esdras; Hamlet, immediately after the killing of Polonius, repeats Cutwolfe's view of divine purpose in man's just homicides: "but heaven hath pleas'd it so,/ To punish me with this and this with me, / That I must be their *scourge* and minister" (3.4.173-75). If Hamlet is as he now thinks he is, "an agent of heaven's will," he is so in exactly the terms used by the vengeful Cutwolfe.

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[4] References for *The Unfortunate Traveller* are to McKerrow, II.

There is a reverberation of Nashe's description of the meeting between Jack Wilton and his Master, the Earl of Surrey, described as "*a Prince*" (242), after a long period of separation, in the meeting of Horatio and *Prince* Hamlet. Jack asks "the reason that moved him thereto" (243), that is, to travel to Europe, and Surrey tells how much he has changed, "full little canst thou perceive how farre Metamorphozed I am from my selfe, since I last saw thee" (243), that is, by his love for Geraldine, a woman so beautiful that kings woo her for marriage and that "death" by her "disdaine" would be sweet. Indeed, Surrey has used his passion "to *furnish* out the *funerall* flame" of his folly (243). Horatio, the "poor servant" (1.2.162) of Hamlet, is asked by the Prince why he has travelled, "what make you from Wittenberg" (1.2.164), a place Surrey and Jack will visit three pages later. Hamlet is much changed in disposition since last he has seen Horatio, chiefly because his mother has been wooed to marriage by the new king so rapidly that the wedding took place upon the heels of his father's burial. As Hamlet, bitterly, mockingly, expresses it, out of a sense of thrift "the *funeral* bak'd meats/Did coldly *furnish* forth the marriage tables" (1.2.180-81). The parallels of servant-princely master, travel-change, woman-royal suitor, made easy the link between the two and produced the specific diction in *Hamlet* of "*furnish*" and "*funeral*." "*Wittenberg*" doubtless helped, but it was enough to have Wilton, Surrey, Geraldine, and Geraldine's royal wooers shadow forth Horatio, Hamlet, Gertrude, and her royal marriage—and Hamlet's passionate upset at his mother's remarriage is that of a rejected lover.

Finally, when the ghost speaks of being sent to his damnation, killed by a poison that gave his body an appearance "Most *lazar*-like, with vile and *loathsome* crust" (1.5.72), he is echoing Esdras's begging of Cutwolfe for life as he is about to be sent to "damnation" (322) in the appeal "leave me as a *lazer* to some *loathesome* spittle" (322), mindful as he is of "thy *brothers* death" (322).

Nashe provided many of the specific details, the allusions to things and gestures often missing from the narrative prose sources of Shakespeare's plays. Or to put it in another way, Nashe added several of the colors with which Shakespeare filled in the outline made by the "painter's cartoon" of the source play or story. This coloring is Shakespearean and inimitable, but the colors themselves often come directly from the tubes marked *Pierce Penilesse*, *Strange Newes*, *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, *Have with you to Saffron-walden*, etc. The brush is Shakespeare's, but the palette, especially the stronger hues, is Nashe's.

Osric

RUSS MCDONALD

Spectators familiar with *Hamlet* anticipate with pleasure the entrance of Osric in the final scene, and those new to the play immediately identify the young courtier as a clown. Sensitive spectators can hardly fail to contrast Osric's frivolous manner with Hamlet's seriousness and nobility, and thus they notice two of Osric's dramatic functions: his absurd behavior alters the tone at the end of the play and fortifies our admiration for the character of the prince. But it is difficult to believe that Shakespeare had no more than this in mind.

The familiar notion of comic relief may be dismissed first. Relief would be of dubious value at this point and would probably be redundant, for as amusing as Osric may be, his encounter with Hamlet is less entertaining than the badinage between the gravediggers or their conversation with Hamlet in the previous scene. Second, Osric's contribution to the plot is virtually nil. His purpose in seeking out the prince, who extracts that aim only with some difficulty, is to propose the wager on the fencing match, but Shakespeare need not have invented so highly-developed a character for so simple a task. The entrance of the unidentified "Lord" to announce the arrival of the royal party indicates as much; this same fellow might have presented the challenge, since the final agreement is made through him. Such functionaries often carry messages or make arrangements at the end of a play. Osric also adjudicates the bout, but once again, so memorable a fool is hardly needed for such an end. Spectators care about the players, not the umpire. Shakespeare has lavished abundant attention and, what is more, a good deal of valuable time upon a minor figure at a crucial moment in this longest and most complex of plays, and as we might expect, such care is calculated to illuminate the final experience of the tragic hero.

What are the effects of Shakespeare's careful and thorough depiction of Osric? Clearly this young aspirant in the Danish court is a fool: he is affected; his exaggerated manners, creating discomfort instead of ease, make him ridiculous and even unpleasant; his speech is overwrought, laughably so; he is patently insincere; consciously or not, he is a stooge of Claudius; on the stage he is often portrayed as impossibly fey; he is a "chough" (a jackdaw, a chatterer) or a "chuff" ("a country fellow of more wealth than worth")[1]; he is a young man on the make; Horatio calls him a "lapwing," Hamlet a "waterfly" and "one who did comply with his dug before a sucked it." In short, it is easy to see what Osric is, but the more interesting question is what he contributes. In addition to the functions already suggested, lightening the tone and magnifying our appreciation of Hamlet himself, he lends support to some major themes. For example, he illustrates Shakespeare's and Hamlet's interest in the pervasive disjunction between merit and reward, typifies in his youth the hollow, fashionable court over which Claudius presides, and replaces Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern as the play's final exponent of triviality, fatuity, and self-importance. But these themes need little reinforcement by this time.

Here we care about Hamlet and only Hamlet, and Osric's principal function is to illuminate the prince's state of mind in his final moments of life. It is ironically appropriate that Hamlet, having been obsessed with the sterility of the world from his first appearance, should be forced to spend several of his last minutes with one who is a walking illustration of that condition. This encounter thus proves the justice of Hamlet's view and influences our response to his impending death. We in the audience hold an ironic advantage over Hamlet at this point, for we know that we have come to see a tragedy, are alert to the conspiracy between Claudius and Laertes, and understand the sinister intent behind the diversion that Osric has been sent to offer. Our sense of dread, however, is qualified by our consciousness that the world is scarcely worth living in; for if "young Osric," as he is called more than once, is what the world is to become, then we feel a certain satisfaction in Hamlet's departure for the undiscovered country. The world is unfit for him. Osric acts as a kind of counterweight to Hamlet, bringing into clear view the distance between moral integrity and courtly shifts. But there is more to it than this.

The contents of the discussion between Osric and Hamlet are often overshadowed by the style in which it is conducted, and it is easy to see why this should be so, since much of the dialogue concerns the courtier's peculiar manner of speaking. Still, we ought to look carefully at what the characters talk about. Naturally they do what most of us do when we have something else on our minds—they talk about the weather. And it might be pointed out that they come to the usual conclusions (it is both cold and hot). This small talk is succeeded by three topics: Osric's praise of Laertes, his description of the items wagered, and his announcement of the odds. Osric's pretentious language and Hamlet's jocular response to it may temporarily distract us from concern for Hamlet's safety, but still this dread is the dominant effect that the scene creates. We recognize Osric as the puppet of the king, remembering the scheme for bringing Hamlet into the swordfight:

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[1] Harold Jenkins, in his notes to the Arden edition of *Hamlet* (London: Methuen, 1982), pp. 399 and 559, provides an extended analysis of possible definitions and concludes that the idea of the unworthy landowner "exactly fits the context." All quotations from *Hamlet* are taken from this edition.

> We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
> And set a double varnish on the fame
> The Frenchman gave you, bring you, in fine, together,
> And wager o'er your heads.
>
> (4.7.130-33)

Osric is the pawn, as is Laertes, for that matter, in the king's defensive strike against Hamlet, and our knowledge of Claudius's perfidy stimulates dread and frustration. It is on this point that "comic relief" seems notably insufficient. Joseph Summers has suggested that we might revise our simple understanding of comic relief, replacing it with a principle that he calls "comic tension," the sort of effect produced by certain moments in the films of Alfred Hitchcock.[2] The director teases the audience: having shown them that the blow will fall, he delays it and interjects a bit of comic business designed both to amuse and to worry the audience I think that this is what Shakespeare is about in the last scene of *Hamlet*, creating tension through comic means. That which relieves also creates anxiety; Osric is both laughable and deadly; our response to him is mixed. And this, of course, is what Hamlet has come to discover about the world. As Harold Jenkins puts it, "The essential subject of *Hamlet* . . . is . . . the intermingling of good and evil in all life."[3]

The placement of Osric's interview, the structure of the material in 5.2, is also meaningful. The first half of the final scene, that preceding the entrance of the king and his retinue, falls into three distinct parts: first is Hamlet's narration to Horatio about his escape from Claudius's trap, his disposal of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and his return to Denmark aboard the pirate ship; the second stage is defined by Osric's entrance and exit; and the last segment, in which the Lord intrudes to announce the coming of the king and his party to observe the swordplay, consists chiefly

[2] In an unpublished paper written for a seminar on "Shakespeare's Clown Scenes" held at the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America in April of 1983.

[3] Introduction to the Arden edition. p. 157.

of Hamlet's rejection of Horatio's misgivings about the match. Maynard Mack and others have discerned an alteration in Hamlet's mood upon his return in 5.1, and it seems to me that the main effect of the first section of 5.2 is to elucidate and justify that change.[4] In short, the conversation about Hamlet's trials at sea indicates his revised view of mortal uncertainty. The prince admits and accepts that human understanding must be partial and that man's efforts to shape his own destiny must be limited. The emphasis in his narrative is on chance, "indiscretion," "rashness," and the unexpected. He also announces, in the familiar lines about "a divinity that shapes our ends," his faith in a providential force. This is the new Hamlet, he who has come to the tragic recognition that truth is never undivided, that human life is and must be a series of compromises, that he, his greatness of spirit notwithstanding, cannot impose his will upon a shifting and complex world. Hamlet now understands the importance of flexibility, the perils of intransigence. This is not to say that he has abandoned the passionate commitment to truth that has made him a hero in the first place, as his remarks about Claudius and Laertes reveal. His description of the king, "this canker of our nature," recalls in its imagery his earlier characterization of Claudius, and the verbs in this passage reveal the familiar powerful feeling: "killed," "whored," "Popped in," "Thrown out his angle." Moreover, his newly-acquired sympathy for Laertes is mitigated by his chronic distress at the discrepancy between substance and show: "the bravery of his grief did put me / Into a towering passion." Hamlet has not discarded the qualities that make him Hamlet, but he has gained perspective and reached an equilibrium that make his coming death all the more disturbing and poignant for the audience. What we feel is Shakespeare's tightening of the tragic noose, the same kind of effect created by the "birds i' the cage" speech in *King Lear*. Hamlet sees that truth has more than one side, that the world is ambiguous, that all right action is tainted with evil.

Enter Osric. His conversation with the prince and Horatio interrupts the revelation of Hamlet's deepened conception of experience, separating the specific narrative on the role of chance and unmeditated action in human affairs from the general conclusions about the need for patience and readiness, the appropriate response to worldly insecurity. Shakespeare summons Osric at just this point, it seems clear, in order to clarify the admirable balance that Hamlet has achieved. But it is safe to say that in his mature phase Shakespeare almost never presented an idea without qualifying it, suggesting its potential inadequacy, or offering an alternative point of view, the technique that Norman Rabkin has called "complementarity." And Osric's function is to embody such criticism.

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[4] "The World of Hamlet," reprinted in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Leonard F. Dean (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 259.

Osric's most salient quality manifests itself just after his entrance, in his response to Hamlet's suggestion that the courtier replace his hat on his head:

> *Osr.* I thank your lordship, it is very hot.
> *Ham.* No, believe me, 'tis very cold, the wind is northerly.
> *Osr.* It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.
> *Ham.* But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.
> *Osr.* Exceedingly, my lord, it is very sultry—as 'twere—
> I cannot tell how.
> (5.2.93-100)

The value of this exchange rests mainly in its exposure of Osric's malleability, his lack of backbone. Hopelessly balled up in his own yarn of courteous rhetoric, Osric swiftly changes the subject to the point of his errand. Certainly this humorous passage pokes fun at courtly obsequiousness, but are there not larger issues at stake by this point in the drama? Besides, Shakespeare would have been unlikely to repeat a joke only recently used: in almost identical fashion, Hamlet has led Polonius to contradict himself about the appearance of "yonder cloud" in 3.2. Yet Osric's shifts seem more meaningful. Shakespeare has sent this fool to intrude on one of the most crucial discussions in the tragedy so as to reveal the pitfalls along the road that Hamlet has finally taken. Osric's inability to commit himself to any position constitutes a critique of Hamlet's new-found practicality, his capacity for compromise. Everyone remembers Hamlet's parody of Osric, but I wish to suggest that Osric is himself a parody of the new Hamlet.

Our understanding of the new Hamlet is completed by the last private conversation before the catastrophe, the last phase of this first half of the final scene, in which Hamlet speaks to Horatio of the "special providence in the fall of a sparrow," the importance of patience, and his commitment of himself to time: "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is't to leave betimes? Let be" (5.2.216-20). These lines, among the most celebrated and stirring in the entire tragedy, complete the discussion of ordinant heaven interrupted by Osric, and the audience is gratified to hear them. Surely this is one source of their familiarity, for they signify a positive change in Hamlet's conception of the world and his place in it. We take an immense satisfaction in the hero's new awareness. He understands man's partial control of his fate. He admits the inevitable limitations on human knowledge, perceiving that while we cannot always discern a pattern in life, such a pattern has been devised by a providential force. He recognizes the positive as well as the negative effects of time. He has learned the lesson of *Lord Jim*: "In the destructive element immerse." This recognition is essential in the operation of the tragic form, for it is the hero's understanding of himself and his condition that makes his end tragic. And yet Shakespeare delicately questions the hero's wisdom by showing us an extreme form of it in practice.

Osric may be taken to represent an exaggerated and ridiculous version of what Hamlet himself has become. Hamlet has adopted a new attitude toward the world; Osric is nothing but a collection of "attitudes." Hamlet has given over his self-absorption and come to understand himself in relation to others ("by the image of my cause I see / The portraiture of his"); Osric seems to have no self at all, existing only in relation to those about him. Hamlet has become aware of the double-sidedness of every issue; Osric is a specialist in speaking out of both sides of his mouth. Hamlet now recognizes that the complexity of moral action must not prevent action; Osric does not scruple over such difficulties, making his way in the Danish court by doing what he is told. Hamlet finally comprehends the value of patience and readiness; Osric is readiness itself. Osric is a time-server, utterly without principle. The temperature is both cold and hot: the truth is meaningless. His flexible, diplomatic, agreeable, compromising character makes him everything that Hamlet was not in Acts 1 through 4, and it also makes him a form of what the new Hamlet might conceivably become. But the prince, as everyone knows, is an exceptionally intelligent character, and Shakespeare expects his audience to perceive the major distinction between wise man and waterfly. Hamlet's sardonic description and manipulation of Osric exposes that difference. Thus Osric is Shakespeare's agent as much as he is Claudius's; through him the playwright simultaneously glorifies and gently mocks his hero.

If this interpretation of Osric's function is correct, then we might reasonably expect to find other such instances of the technique. One figure comes immediately to mind, the Clown in the last act of *Antony and Cleopatra*. This is by no means an identical case, but there are obvious parallels. Shakespeare introduces a hitherto unseen boob shortly before the end of the play, one who amuses the audience with his foolishness, delays the denouement, and serves indirectly as the agent of the protagonist's death. Just as Osric's language illuminates some of the major issues in *Hamlet*, so the Clown's malapropisms reflect the ambiguous nature of the ending of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The Clown says one word but means another; so may Cleopatra. Is the Egyptian queen a dish for the gods or merely a thwarted strumpet? Is her suicide a crafty means of escape from ignominy in Rome or a transcendent act of heroic love? Is the worm a bringer of joy or is there no goodness in the worm? Is his bite mortal or immortal? To the world, this rustic is a simpleton, but we understand him. To Caesar, Cleopatra is a coward and a whore, but we understand her. At least we think we do, but she may indeed have studied "easy ways to die." The Clown's confused diction reflects the delicately-poised meanings of the work as a whole. This fool broadens and challenges our understanding of the tragic figure, and thus he is the country cousin of Osric.

Hamlet's Soliloquies and Shakespeare's Audience

R. W. DESAI

Among the soliloquies of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, Hamlet's stand out for their interrogative content: "And shall I couple hell?" "Am I a coward? / Who calls me villain?" "For who would bear the whips and scorns of time . . . ?" "Who would fardels bear . . . ?" "What is a man . . . ?" "How stand I then . . . ?" In the face of these challenging questions it seems likely that the Elizabethan spectators, some of whom were but a handbreadth from Burbage while the farthest were not more than forty feet away, would have risen to the occasion with audible answers resulting in some kind of brief yet passionate exchange between them and Hamlet.

The nature of Shakespeare's audience has been the subject of considerable speculation. If Robert Bridges felt that it consisted chiefly of "wretched beings who can never be forgiven their share in preventing the greatest poet and dramatist from being the best artist,"[1] the corrective to this view is in Quiller-Couch's equally speculative account of the Elizabethan actor establishing a wonderful rapport with his audience, for, having delivered himself of his soliloquy, he would press his hand to his heart again, "bow to the discriminating applause," and retire upstage.[2] Less fanciful is Bernard Beckerman's conclusion that "in none of the Globe plays is there any certain indication that the audience was directly addressed in the soliloquy. . . . In earlier popular plays actors undoubtedly did. But the plays of the Globe company do not provide conclusive evidence on this point."[3] This lack of conclusive evidence, however, need not debar us from interpreting whatever evidence is available so as to arrive at a conclusion that seems plausible, if unproveable. Keeping in mind B.L. Joseph's salutary warning that "there are no renaissance works which set out specifically to expound the theory and practice of stage-playing,"[4] we can nevertheless look for clues and posit possibilities thereon.

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[1] Robert Bridges, "The Influence of the Audience on Shakespeare's Drama," *Collected Essays, Papers, Etc.* (London: OUP, 1927), vol. 1, p. 29.

[2] Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch, *Shakespeare's Workmanship* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918), p. 64.

[3] Bernard Beckerman, *Shakespeare at the Globe 1599-1609* (1962; rpt. New York: Collier Books, 1966), p. 186.

[4] B.L. Joseph, *Elizabethan Acting* (London: OUP, 1951), p. 16.

Contemporary accounts emphasize the rambunctious behaviour of Elizabethan audiences. Young Loveless in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady* describes the audience as "crack [ing] more nuts than would suffice a dozen squirrels,"[5] and a couplet by T. Palmer prefixed to the first edition of their works runs thus:

> I could praise Heywood now: or tell how long,
> Falstaffe from cracking nuts has kept the throng.[6]

Alfred Harbage has dwelt at length upon the obstreperous and uninhibited participation in the performance on-stage by such audiences. He includes an account of the behaviour of the spectators as described by Stephen Gosson, a contemporary of Shakespeare: " . . . in the Theaters they generally take vp a wonderfull laughter, and shout altogether with one voyce, when they see some notable consenedge practised."[7] And in *Locrine* (1595), an anonymous tragedy the authorship of which was ascribed to Shakespeare in the 17th century, Strumbo asks the spectators, some of whom were presumably seated on the platform, to lend him a knife so that he may sharpen his pen: "My penne is naught; gentlemen, lend me a knife" (1.2.35). Later, he cheerfully says to the audience, "How do you, maisters, how do you? how have you scaped hanging this long time?" (4.2.21-22).[8]

Despite the scepticism with which some of John Cranford Adam's theories have been viewed,[9] his suggestion that gallants were allowed to sit, or rather recline, on rushes strewed on the two sides of the platform is corroborated, as Adams himself points out, by a line in the Induction to *The Malcontent* (1604) where one of the actors says to a gallant, "Good sir, will you leave the stage? I'll help you to a private room."[10] As early in fact as 1911 C.R. Baskerville, perhaps the first to do so, had argued that certain privileged spectators were permitted to sit on the stage,[11] and from this time onwards commentators on Elizabethan stage techniques increasingly came to realize the intimacy that must have existed between actor and audience. Thus John Drinkwater could write in 1933, "The soliloquies also were intended by the poet to be spoken directly to the audience,"[12] and George Fullmer Reynolds in 1940, "The most important assistance offered to the Elizabethan dramatist by his stage was the immediate contact of the actors with the audience."[13]

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[5] See W.J. Lawrence, *Those Nut-Cracking Elizabethans: Studies of the Early Theatre and Drama* (London: The Argonaut Pr., 1935), p. 2.

[6] Rpt. in Gamini Salgado, *Eyewitnesses of Shakespeare: First Hand Accounts of Performances 1590-1890* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975), p. 47.

[7] Rpt. in Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia Univ. Pr., 1941), p. 115.

[8] *The Shakespeare Apocrypha, Being a Collection of Fourteen Plays Which Have Been Ascribed to Shakespeare*, ed. C.F. Tucker Brooke (Oxford: The Clarendon Pr., 1908).

[9] See e.g., A.M. Nagler, *Shakespeare's Stage* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1958), pp. 14, 17, 19; Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare's Wooden O* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959), pp. 291-92, 298.

[10] John Cranford Adams, *The Globe Playhouse: Its Design and Equipment* (1942; rpt New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), pp. 79-80,

But to George Pierce Baker must go the credit of being one of the earliest critics to understand the rapport between actor and audience when the soliloquies were, so to speak, delivered not before but *to* the audience.[14] And Neville Coghill maintains that after dismissing Polonius, the actors, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet "turns at last to the audience with a sudden relaxing and relief, as to old friends, and says: 'Now I am alone.' This phrase is not so banal as it seems: it marks his first chance to take them back into his secrets,"[15] while for Raymond Williams, when Cleopatra refers to Antony as "he" (1.1. 40-41), she is not talking aside, but rather, taking the audience into her confidence.[16]

Perhaps the most comprehensive statement of this interaction has been made by J.L. Styan who reminds us that "the tradition remained strong for some two hundred years that the character speaking in soliloquy should speak directly to the spectators," and he goes on to suggest "that Shakespeare saw his actors as playing to their audience most of the time." But though Styan pictures the Elizabethan actor as being "compelled to communicate with the audience, provoking it and provoked by it," and calls the exchange "this lively tradition of a two-way traffic,"[17] he does not draw the plausible conclusion that the audience might have participated audibly in Hamlet's questioning by furnishing spirited replies and comments.

Hamlet of course repeatedly directs questions to himself which he immediately answers: "And shall I couple hell? O fie!" "Remember thee? / Ay, thou poor ghost"; "What would he do / Had he the motive and the cue for pasion / That I have ? He would drown the stage with tears"; "What is a man, / If his chief good and market of his time / Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more." But Hamlet does not answer all of his questions. In, for example, the "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" soliloquy, after reproaching himself for being "a dull and muddy-mettled rascal" and asking "Am I a coward?" he then goes on to ask, "Who calls me villain ?" questions that seem to demand instant answers from his listeners.

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[11] C.R. Baskerville, "The Custom of Sitting on the Elizabethan Stage," *Modern Philology*, 8 (April 1911), 581-89.

[12] John Drinkwater, *Shakespeare* (London: Duckworth, 1935), p. 86.

[13] George Fullmer Reynolds, *The Staging of Elizabethan Plays* (New York: Modern Language Assocn. of America, 1940), p. 190.

[14] George Pierce Baker, *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), p. 308.

[15] Neville Coghill, *Shakespeare's Professional Skills* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1964), pp. 157-8.

[16] Raymond Williams, *Drama in Performance* (London: A.C. Watts, 1968), p. 65.

[17] J.L. Styan, *Shakespeare's Stagecraft* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1967), pp. 72, 75, 96.

The Folio rendering of this particular passage is a pointer toward the probability that the text is here a faithful record, not .necessarily of what Shakespeare wrote, but of the manner in which the soliloquy, as delivered on-stage by successive actors in the role of Hamlet over a period of over two decades, from around 1600 to 1623, the year the *First Folio* appeared, gradually came to encompass a certain amount of rapid give and take between actor and audience. The Folio rendering is as follows:

Am I a Coward?
Who calles me Villaine? breakes my pate a-croffe?
Pluckes off my Beard, and blowes it in my face?
Tweakes me by 'th' Nofe? giues me the Lye i'th 'Throate,
As deepe as to the Lungs? Who does me this?
Ha? Why I fhould take it: for it cannot be,
But I am Pigeon-Liuer'd, and lacke Gall
To make Oppreffion bitter, or ere this,
I fhould haue fatted all the Region Kites
With this Slaues Offall, bloudy: a Bawdy villaine,
Remorfeleffe, Treacherous, Letcherous, kindles villaine!
Oh Vengeance!
Who? What an Affe am I? I fure, this is moft braue . . . .[18]

The lines might be construed to suggest that the questions Hamlet puts elicit replies from the audience, perhaps from the gallants seated on the platform. The opening lines, with interpolations from the audience, might then read thus:

Am I a Coward? [*Yea, thou art, thou Villaine*]
Who calls me Villaine? [*We do, for so thou art*].

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[18] *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), p. 772; 2.2. 582-94.

and when, towards the end of the passage Hamlet works himself into a frenzy with "Oh Vengeance!" (a line occurring only in F) further shouts and interjections from the groundlings induce Hamlet to ask, "Who? What an Affe am I? followed by his acquiescence, "I sure."

Interestingly enough, this line in the Second Quarto (1604) is rendered thus: "Why what an Affe am I, this is most braue." Devoid of punctuation, except for a comma marking a metrical pause,[19] the line here is an expression of stoical self-realisation; it is not an exclamation, a sudden flash of self-discovery ("Why, what an ass am I!") as almost all modern editors render it.[20] On the other hand, in the Folio published nineteen years later not only are there two separate questions ("Who? What an Affe am I?") suggesting incredulity and resentment, but these are followed by Hamlet's acknowledgment of the charge, "I sure," which does not appear in the Second Quarto. In fact, in the entire soliloquy there are only two signs of interrogation in the Second Quarto's version, whereas there are no less than fourteen in the Folio's version. Ronald Watkins's reminder is timely in this connection: "Help can be derived from the punctuation of the Quarto and Folio texts, especially when it represents a system not of grammatical but of declamatory pointing. When we have decided on the meaning, we must bring it out: then the critics will agree or disagree with our interpretation."[21]

The very imperfections of the Folio that, as Thomas Marc Parrot and Hardin Craig point out, render it inferior to the Second Quarto textually are its strengths theatrically in that they shed invaluable light on the style of acting and the audience response then prevalent. Parrot and Craig write, "The text of the Folio appeared seven years after Shakespeare's death; the original had been cut and altered for stage purposes .... To read the *Hamlet* that Shakespeare wrote we must revert to the 'true and perfect copy', the Second Quarto."[22] And, more recently, Charlton

[19] See Percy Simpson, *Shakespearian Punctuation* (Oxford: The Clarendon Pr., 1911), pp. 24-26.

[20] See, e.g., editions of the *Complete Works* by Peter Alexander (London: Collins, 1951); G.B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968); John Munro (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957); and editions of the play by Nigel Alexander (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973); Edward Hubler (New York: Signet, 1963); George Rylands (Oxford: The Clarendon Pr., 1947). So far as I have been able to determine, John Dover Wilson alone among twentieth-century editors of the play renders the line without an exclamation: "Why, what an ass am I."

[21] Ronald Watkins, *On Producing Shakespeare* (1950; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 113.

[22] Thomas Marc Parrott and Hardin Craig, eds. *The Tragedy of Hamlet: A Critical Edition of the Second Quarto 1604 With Introduction and Textual Notes* (Princeton: Princeton Univ: Pr., 1938), p. v.

Hinman has observed, "As Q2 of *Hamlet* is for the most part based directly upon an autograph manuscript, whereas the Folio text often represents the prompt-book instead, there can be no real question as to which usually preserves the sounder text."[23] Being textual editors, these scholars very rightly deplore the deleterious influence of the stage upon the transmission of Shakespeare's text, an influence that occasioned some of the aberrations in the Folio. But it is precisely these aberrations that provide clues to the manner in which the soliloquies may have been delivered by the actor playing Hamlet, and may have been received by the audience.

As an example of Parrott and Craig's unidimensional approach, we may consider two of their comments, the first on Hamlet's cry, "Oh Vengeance !": "Q. omits the cry *Oh vengeance*, found in F. after *kindleffe villaine*. Most editors admit it into the text, but it may well be an actor's or prompter's addition, due, perhaps, to a reminiscence of the old 'Hamlet, revenge' "; and the second, their comment on Hamlet's two questions in tandem as rendered in the Folio ("Who? What an Affe am I?"): "A palpable misprint, perhaps of a *Ho* in the copy."[24] But why "A palpable misprint"? The argument that the "Why" of Q2 became a "Ho" in the copy is far-fetched, and that this "Ho" in turn become a "Who?" in the Folio is equally far-fetched. Instead of explaining these changes in terms of printers' errors, why not examine the possibility of theatrical intervention being responsible for them? And, in fact, Parrott and Craig do precisely this when they say that Hamlet's "Oh Vengeance!" may well be an actor's or prompter's addition. Why not extend the argument and consider the likelihood of Hamlet's double barreled question in the Folio being likewise an *ad lib*, the outcome of a spirited exchange between actor and audience? Harold Jenkins has pointed out numerous examples from the Folio of additions by the actors of repetitions, exclamations, interjections, and even little scraps of dialogue.[25]

In short, it may not be far-fetched to suppose that on Shakespeare's stage, some time between 1604 and 1623, when Burbage as Hamlet reached the climax of his soliloquy with "Oh Vengeance!", a spectator interrupted him saying something like "Oh what an ass art thou!", perhaps recalling—and anticipating—the epithet from an earlier production of which the Second Quarto is a record, or even a production of the First Quarto (1603) where the line occurs much earlier in the soliloquy and without the emotive overtones of the Second Quarto,[26] and in response Burbage asked, "Who? What an Affe am I? I sure," a line that came to be incorporated in the Folio. Alfred Harbage has pointed out that unlike our century in which a cinema-goer can see a new movie every night, the theater-goer of Shakespeare's time had very little choice; seeing the same play several times, he would be "able to quote considerable passages in the manner of the actors."[27] And agreeing with John Dover Wilson's hypothesis that between the prompt-book and the Folio there was a transcript made by someone who knew the play well and who at times relied upon memory,[28] W.W. Greg speculates that "some of the errors may even be variants that had established themselves on the stage."[29]

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[23] Charlton Hinman, "Introduction," *The First Folio*, p. xiii.

[24] Parrott and Craig, p. 136.

[25] Harold Jenkins, ed. *Hamlet* (London: Methuen, The Arden Shakespeare, 1982), pp. 62-65. See also his "Playhouse Interpolations in the Folio *Hamlet*," *Studies in Bibliography*, 13 (1960), 31-49.

Another possibility too may be entertained: Burbage's style of delivery of the vituperative line "Remorfeleffe, Treacherous, Letcherous, kindles villaine!" followed by the cry "Oh Vengeance!" must have depicted a Hamlet overcome by emotion. In Shakespeare's time, as perhaps today as well, such an excess was regarded as being unmanly, a point Claudius makes to Hamlet early in the play (1.2.94). In *Antony and Cleopatra*, written not long after *Hamlet*, Enobarbus, emotionally stirred by Antony's farewell to his "household servants," is reduced to tears:

> And I, an ass, am onion-eyed. For shame,
> Transform us not to women.
>
> (4.1.8, 35-6)

Here the association of emotional excess with "an ass" and then with "women" is paralleled by Hamlet's outburst in which, after the notion of an ass is asserted, he likens himself to "a whore" and "a very drab." Given the general prevalence of this kind of an association, it would be quite likely that the audience would spontaneously accuse Hamlet of such an asinine weakness, a charge that he accepts with the words, "I sure." Further, in these lines he is denouncing himself for being a pigeon-liver'd coward lacking gall, even as to Antony in *Julius Caesar*, written shortly before *Hamlet*, Lepidus is "a slight unmeritable man" unworthy of the honors heaped upon him:

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[26] "Confound the ignorant, and make mute the wise, / Indeede his passion would be generall. / Yet I like to an asse and Iohn a Dreames, / Hauing my father murdred by a villaine . . . ."

[27] Harbage (n. 7 above), p. 48.

[28] John Dover Wilson, *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' and the Problem of Its Transmission. An Essay in Critical Bibliography* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1934), 2 vols.

[29] W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford: The Clarendon Pr., 1955), p. 327. See also Alice Walker, "The Textual Problem in *Hamlet*: A Reconsideration," *RES* (Oct 1951), 328-38 and J.M. Nosworthy, *Shakespeare's Occasional Plays: Their Origin and Transmission* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), p. 222, both of whom are in general agreement with Greg's suggestion.

> He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold,
> To groan and sweat under the business,
> Either led or driven, as we point the way.
> (4.1.21-3)

That these lines anticipate the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, in particular the line "To grunt and sweat under a weary life," seem clear. I give these two examples only to show that the association of febrile emotionalism, of unworthiness or inadequacy, with an asinine incompetence seems to have been current in Shakespeare's age, and that his audience could have made the association spontaneously—and noisily.

The entire passage, reconstructed in terms of its excited reception by the audience, might have run thus:

> Am I a Coward? [*Yea, thou art, thou Villaine*]
> Who calles me Villaine? [*We do, for so thou art*] breakes
> my pate a-croſſe?
> Pluckes off my Beard, and blowes it in my face?
> Tweakes me by 'th'Noſe? giues me the Lye i'th'Throate,
> As deepe as to the Lungs? Who does me this? [*I do. I*
> *bite my thumb at you. I give thee the Lie Direct*]
> Ha? Why I ſhould take it: for it cannot be,
> But I am Pigeon-Liuer'd, and lacke Gall
> To make Oppreſſion bitter, [*Ay, ay, a Coward*] or ere this,
> I ſhould haue fatted all the Region Kites
> With this Slaues Offall, bloudy: a Bawdy villaine,
> Remorſeleſſe, Treacherous, Letcherous, kindles villaine!
> Oh Vengeance! [*Oh, what an ass art thou!*]
> Who? What an Aſſe am I? I ſure, this is most braue . . . .

We might well wonder whether such interruptions by the audience would not disrupt the continuity of thought and action. The answer might be: no more than does the laughter of the audience during moments of comedy. Besides, it is clear from Hamlet's advice to the players before the commencement of *The Murder of Gonzago* that both actors and audience were inclined to convert the playwright's work into an uproarious free-for-all (3.2.1-47). Hamlet's strong disapproval of the liberties actors took with the text is an indication of its not being regarded as sacrosanct. An actor as experienced as Burbage was could have skilfully incorporated his replies to the audience's comments into the fabric of the soliloquy, and this perhaps explains some of the deviant readings in the Folio text as compared to the Second Quarto.[30] Shakespeare makes Falstaff do precisely this when the Hostess chimes in from the sidelines, wiping tears of laughter from her eyes, during the enacture of the imagined scene between the King and Hal in which Falstaff takes the part of the King:

> *Hostess.* Oh Jesu, this is excellent sport, i'faith!
> *Fal.* Weep not, sweet queen, for trickling tears are vain.
> *Hostess.* Oh, the father, how he holds his countenance!
> *Fal.* For God's sake, lords, convey my tristful queen,
> For tears do stop the floodgates of her eyes.
>
> (*1H4.* 2.4.428-32)

Though the Hostess's remarks are not addressed to Falstaff directly, he effortlessly sweeps her into the action by conferring upon her the part of a queen, and then dismisses her airily with no disruption of the play's continuity having taken place.

What I am suggesting, then, is that at certain points in Hamlet's soliloquies actor and audience have what could constitute something like a stichomythia, a rapid-fire give and take. Such a theory might explain the metamorphosis of the line "Why what an Affe am I" in the Second Quarto (1604) to "Who? What an Affe am I? I sure" in the Folio (1623). In terms of this theory, the evident frenzy of some of the lines in Hamlet's soliloquies—as recorded in the Folio with its plentiful use of signs of interrogation and exclamation—would have been a vocally shared experience by Shakespeare's audience and not merely a histrionic "performance" by the actor who had the role of Hamlet. Modern audiences, polite, tame, and civilized, have lost the keen involvement that Shakespeare's audience had with his tragic heroes.

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[30] See Martin Holmes, *Shakespeare and Burbage* (London: Phillimore, 1978), p. 44, for an account of Burbage's "versatility that we know to have been [his] particular characteristic."

Carrion that God Kissed: Hamlet's Devotional Reading

GEORGIA B. CHRISTOPHER

Polonius never learns what book Hamlet is reading in Act 2, scene 2, because when he asks, the impudent reply is "Words, words, words."[1] If we pursue Polonius's question, we may be able to suggest a new solution for the famous crux of "good [God] kissing carrion" and also to infer something about Hamlet's state of mind in the scene in which he rejects Ophelia.

As Staunton suggested,[2] Hamlet seems to be reading from the book in hand when he says,

> For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog,
> being a good kissing carrion—
>
> (2.2.181-182)

Hamlet breaks off suddenly as Polonius approaches, asking the old man—"Have you a daughter?" (182). While an "if" clause is not enough to identify an exact volume, the notion that the sun acts upon decaying matter has been useful in religious discourse ever since St. Augustine. It could explain how God can act in the world, yet without taint: one "ought to observe that the rays of the sun . . . are poured over evil-smelling drains and other horrible things and do their natural work [of corruption] there without being made foul by any contamination."[3]

Calvin, whose theology informed the Thirty-nine Articles and the glosses of the Geneva Bible (which Shakespeare normally quotes), drew heavily upon St. Augustine and borrowed the analogy of the sun's action upon carrion to explain his own dark paradox about Providence: nothing happens in the world that is not God's will, and yet God does not cause evil:

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[1] *Hamlet* 2.2.192, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). All references to the play are from this edition.

[2] Howard Staunton was the first to see lines 181-182 "as something read, or affected to be read, by Hamlet." See *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, ed. Horace Furness (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1871-1919), III, 149.

[3] *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. John H.S. Burleigh (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), p. 359. C.M. Ingleby, in *Shakespeare Hermeneutics* (New York, rpt. Haskell House, 1971), p. 159n, first adduced this parallel from *De Fide et Symbole* (iv. 70), in which St. Augustine uses the analogy of the sun to explain why Jesus received no taint from female generative organs at birth.

> And whence I pray you, commeth the stinke in a dead carrion, which had bin both rotted and disclosed by heate of the sunne? All men see that it is raised by the beames of the sunne. Yet no man doth therefore say, that the sunbeames do stinke.

Hence the conclusion:

> Why [should it] be thought that God is any thing defiled with it, if he use [evil men's] service as their pleasure.[4]

The analogy of the sun's "corrupting" action found its way into other pious works. In *The Anatomy of Abuses*, for example, Philip Stubbes claims that suntan is but an outward sign of men's inward corruption: "No more is their fowlenes to be ascribed to the stelliferous beames of ye glistering Sun, then ye stench of a dead carcasse may be said to come of ye sun, and not rather of it [*sic*] own corruption."[5]

One need not assume that Hamlet is reading either Calvin or Stubbes; but, given the currency of this analogy in religious contexts, it is reasonable to assume that Hamlet is reading some doctrinal work—a book of sermons or devotions, or perhaps a popular condensation of the *Institutes*. In short, Hamlet seems to be pondering a homiletical *topos*. If so, Warburton's emendation of "good" to "God" in line 182 seems to be justified.[6] After all, Hamlet takes seriously the Almighty's canon against self-slaughter and is wont to meditate upon large questions like "What is man?" (2.2.303f). Thus when Hamlet muses aloud upon *half* of Calvin's paradox, is it not likely that he is pondering the theological themes implicated in the other half? "For if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog," then God (like the sun) draws forth evil acts from the evil heart of man, disclosing them to all. "God kissing carrion" then seems to be a condensation—Calvin's analogy with the middle term elided.

The reversible syntax of "God kissing carrion" mirrors the paradoxical coincidence of man's evil will and God's pure will. As scholarly notes over the last 150 years have attested, the phrase cannot be resolved into a single active or passive construction: "God-kissing carrion" and "God [who is] kissing carrion" are both possible readings.[7] One may choose to emphasize either man's motions or God's governance of things, and both these alternatives become the subject of Hamlet's rumination and anger during the course of the play. He seems to be caught between the metaphysical poles of Calvin's paradox, sometimes seeing himself as Sin personified, and sometimes as a "victim" of Providence. Hamlet's consistently bitter tone suggests that he is viewing Calvin's paradox from its raw underside.[8] One has only to tilt the pardox by a few degrees for it to yield a sinister view of things, a point that Calvin himself understood and made rhetorical use of in the *Institutes*. For example, the Reformer tilts the paradox towards God's governance, asking

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[4] John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion Written in Latine by M. Iohn Calvine, and translated inio English according to the authors last edition by Thomas Norton* (London, 1578), I, xvii, 5.

[5] *Anatomy of Abuses* (London: Shakespeare Society, 1877), pp. 79-80.

[6] Warburton was the first commentator to find a theological allusion in this passage and to recommend that "good" be emended to "God" in line 182. He argued that here Hamlet "endeavors to answer [the] objection [of the libertines], and vindicate Providence, even on a supposition of the fact, that almost all men were wicked." Dr. Johnson called this a "noble emendation, which almost sets the critic on a level with the author." The emendation was accepted by others, notably Hudson, Moberly and Clarendon. Malone took the sun, not as a metaphor for God, but as an agent of corruption. See *New Variorum*, III, 146, 147-50.

> Why shall the murtherer be punished which hath slayne him whose life the Lorde has ended? If all such men do serve the will of God, why shall they be punished?

Then Calvin corrects the slant so that the paradox is poised correctly:

> he which is caried [*sic*] with an evill minde doth service to God as commaunder of it, where in deed he doth but obey his owne wicked lust.[9]

Similarly, Hamlet slants the paradox from one side to the other, only occasionally giving full weight both to personal responsibility and to divine governance. Early in the play he feels caught by some heavenly "spite" that has thrust him into an unwonted role: he feels that he "was *born* to set [Denmark] right" (1.5.188-189, my italics). When following the ghost, he shouts, "My fate cries out, . . . / Still am I call'd" (1.4.81, 84), as if drawn by some perverse vocation. Events beyond his control have elicited bloody intents and purposes that he cannot shake, so he complains of being "too much in the sun," as if anticipating the theme of "sun kissing carrion."

At other moments Hamlet cannot blame the heavens, even implicitly. At such times he decries the myriad offenses he could unpack from his heart, or confesses a rage to "drink hot blood" (3.2.390). When at the end of the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy he sees Ophelia enter across the hall, presumably reading her prayer book, he softly cries, "Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins rememb'red" (3.1.88-89). There are some occasions, however momentary, when Hamlet admits both his responsibility and a divine ordering of things. Upon discovering Polonius behind the arras, Hamlet views it as justice discovered: "heaven hath pleas'd it so / To punish me with this, and this with me" (3.4.173-174). By the time that he returns from England he can accept with full equanimity both his own dark heart and divine governance of events. Of the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern he says, "even in that was heaven ordinant" (5.2.48).

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[7] The readings of Malone and Coleridge, for example, illustrate the reversible syntax of "God kissing carrion." See *New Variorum*, III, 147-148.

[8] Warburton, on the contrary, found Hamlet uttering affirmations—sentiments "as noble . . . in behalf of Providence as could come from the schools of divinity," *New Variorum*, III, 146.

[9] *Institutes*, I, xvii, 5.

Questions of sin and guilt are not the only things troubling Hamlet in Act 2, scene 2. Because it is the concrete half of Calvin's analogy that Hamlet reads aloud, its terms become important in the punning fabric of the scene. With a Joycean fluidity,[10] "Kissing" and "carrion" and breeding" take on other referents, suggesting that Ophelia's ripe sexuality is not far from his mind. Even while meditating upon doctrinal conundrums, the lusty half of his mind is engaged, much in the way that John Donne can begin an elaborate explanation of Neoplatonic love in "The Exstasie" by mentioning the "pregnant bank" upon which the lovers lie and so proceed to lard his philosophical discourse with references to sweaty palms and getting babies.[11] Sylvan Barnet and G. Blakemore Evans appropriately find a semi-bawdy reference to Ophelia in "kissing carrion,"[12] and there is also perhaps a reference to Hamlet himself in "sun," when he warns Polonius, "Let her not walk i' th' sun" (2.2.184). It is not possible, finally, to determine whether metaphysical or sensual referents are uppermost in his mind. Nor can one distinguish self-revelation from conscious artifice in the presence of the fusty old courtier. The referents of "carrion" may include Hamlet and Ophelia, and even Polonius, who has "most weak hams" (200f). The cruelty of referring to the old man's debility in detailed and concrete terms—under the safety of pretended madness—suggests that

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[10] The rotting carrion of *Hamlet* 2.2.181-182 has been variously seen as referring to original sin (Warburton, Johnson, *et al.*), to imminent corruption of a female like Ophelia (Malone), to general decay of honesty in the world of men (Whiter), and to an inevitable decay in the natural world (Malone). See *New Variorum*, III, 146-151.

[11] John Donne, "The Exstasie," in *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), pp. 59-61, see especially lines 2, 11-12.

[12] A long line of commentators, beginning with Knight, has taken "kissing carrion" as a reference to Ophelia. Recent editors, such as G. Blakemore Evans and Sylvan Barnet, who leave the original "good kissing carrion" in line 182, limit the phrase to physical or bawdy reference, glossing it as "flesh good enough for the sun to kiss" or "a good piece of flesh to kiss." See, respectively, *The Riverside Shakespeare* and *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972).

Hamlet may not be far wrong if he thinks of himself as rotten carrion. His behavior toward Polonius is the revenge of a weak man, the snarl of a rat caught in a cage—or inside a theological paradox. Hamlet knows that the more he rages to "drink hot blood" (3.2.390), the fouler he is of soul—and the more earns (and concomitantly comes to desire) the end he feels divinity has shaped for him.

Gertrude as Critic

ROBERT F. WILLSON, JR.

The widely-held view of Gertrude is that she is weak-willed, a victim of Claudius's insinuating rhetoric, but not guilty of conspiracy in the murder of Hamlet's father.[1] Bradley points out that Hamlet's reaction to his mother's "lust" infects his love for Ophelia; both become examples of fallen Eve in the hero's disturbed mind.[2] Emphasizing another aspect of her weakness, Eliot described Gertrude's character as "negative and insignificant." She must be presented in this manner to reinforce Hamlet's inability to objectify his feelings toward her.[3] These views demonstrate how much our perception of Gertrude's nature and conduct depends on Hamlet's interpretation.

That Shakespeare offers an independent—though not necessarily opposed—assessment based on the queen's own words may be revealed by her comments on the styles of speeches made by others in the play. This critical bent could be taken as evidence that Gertrude is preoccupied with the art or manner of expression rather than with substance. When Polonius, for instance, proffers his tedious, pedantic explanation of the growth of Hamlet's love melancholy in 2,2, it is Gertrude who interrupts him with a telling, aphoristic remark: "More matter with less art" (line 95).[4] This assertion serves to highlight Polonius's annoying loquacity, as well as his character flaw of instructing others but failing to heed his own moral advice. Yet there is no sign that Gertrude recognizes this defect in the old counselor; she (and we) simply wants him to get on with his message. Hers is the kind of witty turn of phrase, however, that often marks a somewhat shallow, courtier-like personality. It could as well be Shakespeare's way of ironically commenting on the apparent ease with which Gertrude fells prey to Claudius's "art" of expression. What she readily criticizes in Polonius she has failed to identify in Claudius.

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[1] See Alfred Harbage's useful discussion of her character in *As They Liked It* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), pp. 93-94.

[2] A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London, 1904; rpt. New York: Meridian Books., Inc., 1955), p. 101.

[3] T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," in *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1950), p. 125.

[4] All citations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974).

A more revealing piece of aesthetic commentary comes in the midst of "The Murder of Gonzago," Hamlet's interlude designed to catch the king's conscience (3.4). Responding to Hamlet's query about how she likes the performance, especially the speeches of the Player Queen, Gertrude observes that "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" (line 230). Hamlet's sardonic rejoinder ("O but she'll keep her word") plays on the word "protest," underscoring the connotation "profess." But Gertrude wishes to find fault with the Player Queen's histrionics—"protest" had this connotation in Elizabethan usage (*OED*)—and reveals no understanding of the word in the way Hamlet uses it. Although Hamlet seeks to rebuke Gertrude for her faithlessness, Shakespeare certainly wants us to grasp Gertrude's blindness to content, her preoccupation with formal matters. This instance of her superficial perception is especially significant because it complements and enlarges the theatrical metaphor that dominates the play.[5] Gertrude's failure to understand the moral implications of the role *she* plays serves to highlight the contrast between Claudius as "bad" actor and Hamlet's father as "good" actor in the role of king. Gertrude has protested too much in performing as companion to the usurper, who has likewise deceived others into believing that he can act as king.

It is not until Hamlet turns Gertrude's eyes into her soul (3.4.89-90) that she begins to comprehend her mistake, her lack of insight. Yet even during this scene she retains her critic's manner, assuring Hamlet that the Ghost is "the very coinage" of his brain, the cunning "creation" of passion (lines 137-39). She again seems preoccupied with form and proves unable to entertain the possibility that Hamlet has glimpsed a truth she is incapable of understanding. He makes her experience guilt but does not succeed in expanding her awareness of Claudius's villainy. As if to underscore this point, Shakespeare has her announce, in answer to Hamlet's question about whether she sees the Ghost: "Nothing at all, yet all that is I see" (line 132). We are meant to take this statement as having a double meaning; Gertrude has proved blind to Claudius's motives as well as to the Ghost. Her final act—the drinking of the poisoned wine—qualifies as a tragic mistake, yet another misstep by one whose nature prevents her from glimpsing the significance of events and actions.

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[5] See Wendy Coppedge Sanford, *Theater as Metaphor in "Hamlet"* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

The Date of Dekker's *The Meeting of Gallants* and the Printing of *Hamlet*

WILLEM SCHRICKX

In his classic edition of *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker* (Oxford, 1925)[1] Professor Frank P. Wilson wrote the following passage about the date of composition of *The Meeting of Gallants* (p. 238) :

> The dialogue between War, Famine, and the Pestilence was clearly inspired by the plague of 1603, but we cannot fix the date of composition more exactly. The prose dialogue was written after the Christmas of 1603 (cf. p. 132, l. 15: 'the last Christmas'), when the lawyers had returned from Winchester to Westminister (p. 115, ll. 29, 30) for the Hilary Term (23 January-12 February). Shuttlecock hails Ginglespur as 'the first Gallant I mette in Powles, since the one and thirtie daie, or the decease of Iuly' (p. 113, ll. 7-9), and later Ginglespur remarks that 'the Moone hath had aboue sixe great Bellies since wee walkt here last together, and layne in as often' (p. 115, ll. 16-18). There is no reference to James's Passage through the City of London on the 15th March, so that the date of composition is probably the late January or early February of 1604.

It is clear that for this date ascription Wilson relied on the internal evidence of the pamphlet but there are two temporal references in it which he failed to discuss, namely "the ninth of August" (p. 117) and "I haue beene a merrie Knaue this sixe and fortie yeares" (p. 120). The latter reference was not commented on by Wilson and yet it points unmistakably to a date later than 17 November 1604, for what Dekker is clearly thinking of is Queen Elizabeth's accession day, which had been fairly regularly celebrated ever since her accession on 17 November 1558. If the Queen had still been alive she would, after 17 November 1604, have been in the forty-sixth year of her reign, this evidently being the period in which Dekker was writing.[2] Naturally enough, the date-ascription advanced by Wilson was determined by the date on the title-page of Dekker's pamphlet, which appeared with the following imprint: London/ Printed by T.C. and are to be solde by Mathew/Lawe, dwelling in Paules Church- / yard. 1604. / . Wilson's argument for a composition-date in "late January or early February" 1604 is completely convincing except for the year date. Once it is realised that most of the items of his argument are not necessarily linked to a specific year-date, whereas "this sixe and fortie yeares" is, then a composition-date after Christmas 1604 becomes much more plausible. W.W. Greg[3] has pointed out that a "book dated 1603 may have appeared as early perhaps as November 1602 or as late as March 1604, a span of sixteen or seventeen months." As will be pointed out later, I believe that those copies of the Second Quarto of *Hamlet* which bore the date 1604 were in reality printed in the first months of 1605.

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[1] In the text of this article all page references to Dekker's pamphlet are to F.P. Wilson's edition (Oxford Univ. Pr., 1925).

[2] Dekker's awareness of the chronology of the reign of Queen Elizabeth also appears from the fact that he describes James's entry into London on 15 March 1604 as a "forty-five years' wonder" in his pamphlet *The Magnificent Entertainment given to King James and Queen Anne* (1604). In *News from Gravesend* (ed. Wilson, p. 88) Dekker speaks of "45. yeares husht account" in reference to the fact that Elizabeth would have started the forty-fifth year of her reign from 17 November 1603.

But it is the ninth of August passage which places the composition of *The Meeting of Gallants* yet more firmly in late 1604 or early 1605, because there is not the least doubt that it is connected with the peace treaty of London — or with the Somerset House Conference as it is called in English history — which was concluded on 19 August 1604. It was in fact ten days earlier, on the ninth, that England, Spain and the Spanish Netherlands (with its court and capital at Brussels) had begun preparations for this event. It was a treaty which brought to an end the long-protracted hostilities between these three countries. Let me now quote this important passage in context.

> And this makes me call to memory the strange and wonderfull dressing of a Coach that scudded through *London* the ninth of *August*, for I put the day in my Table-booke, because it was worthy the registring. This fearefull pittifull Coach was all hung with Rue from the top to the toe of the Boote, to keepe the leather and the nayles from infection; the very Nosthrills of the Coach-horses were stopt with hearb-grace, that I pittied the poore Beasts being almost windlesse, and hauing then more Grace in their Noses, then their Maister had in all his bosome, and thus they ran through *Cornewell* iust in the middle of the street, with such a violent Trample as if the Diuell had bene Coachman.
>
> Sig. Kickshow.
>
> A very excellent Folly, that the name of the Plague should take the wall of a Coach, and driue his Worship downe into the Chanell.

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[3] W.W. Greg, "Old Style-New Style" in *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, ed. J.G. McManaway (Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1948), p. 569.

> But see how we haue lost our selues, *Powles* is changde into Gallants, and those which I saw come vp in old Taffata Doublets yesterday, are slipt into nine yardes of Sattin to day.

"The ninth of August," a day Dekker put in his tablebook because it was worthy the registering, marked the arrival and reception in London of a Spanish delegation which was headed by Juan de Velasco, Duke of Frias and Constable of Castile. The representative of the Brussels court was Charles, Prince-Count of Arenberg (1550-1616), who had been in residence at Stepney for some time. He left his temporary home on the ninth of August to welcome the Spanish embassy which had arrived in Gravesend on that day. It was King James's "inner cabinet" which had been sent out to welcome Juan de Velasco on the same day, the King himself being notably absent enjoying his favourite hunting sport. It is in Arenberg's unpublished correspondence with the Brussels court, preserved in the General Archives in Brussels (*Audience*, dossier 364, fol. 333) that we find an interesting description of what happened on that memorable day of the ninth of August when Velasco made his ceremonial entry on the river Thames. The letter itself is dated from London 12 / 22 August 1604.[4] Arenberg and his retinue were accommodated at Durham House and were attended on by the actors of the Queen's company, while the Spanish embassy was to be served by Augustine Phillips, John Heminges and the King's Men at Somerset House (see E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. IV, 169-170). In the following transcript of Arenberg's letter I have identified the persons mentioned by the use of square brackets.

> Et audict Grauesande vint le Conte de Northampton pour le [the Constable] conduire jusques à son logis à Londres comme il fist, accompagné dudict Baron [Lord Edward Wotton, Treasurer of the household] et y auoient apresté vne vingtaine de barges fort bien accommodées quy sont batteaux à vj et viij Reymes de quoy ces Seigneurs d'Angleterre vont par la Riuière et arriuant vers Grunwitz vindrent force barguettes comme gandoles sur la riuière pour veoir l'entrée. Et passant le pont, vismes en vne grande barge, le grand Admiral [Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham], le Grand Chamberlain [Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk], et Milord Ciscel [Robert Cecil], auecq des dames masquées et la barge couuerte, où se recognut

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[4] A longer extract from this letter was printed in my article on the English actors on the Continent in *Shakespeare Survey*, 33 (1980), 164. On the Treaty of London itself see J. Cuvelier, "Les preliminaires du traite de Londres (29 aout 1604)," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, II (1923), 279-304, 485-508.

> la Royne [Anne of Denmark, wife of King James], arriuée à la maison laquelle estoit fort brauement accommodée pour le Conestable [Juan de Velasco, Duke of Frias and Constable of Castile].

The London theatrical community was of course much aware of the presence in their midst of their one-time enemies; and "old, honest" Dekker, the author of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, a play premiered before Queen Elizabeth at Christmas 1599-1600, must have been sorely grieved by the course events had taken. The "fearefull pittifull Coach," which scudded through London on the ninth of August, was Dekker's metaphorical description of those who had to welcome Velasco, and the phrase on the coach-horses whose nostrils were stopped with herb of grace that had more grace in their noses than "their *Master* . . . in all his bosome" pointed to King James I as their master, who had "long since tired of playing the gracious sovereign,"[5] and who, during his entry into London in March 1604, had shown great apathy in his public appearances.

To say that the composition date of *The Meeting of Gallants* was January or February 1605 has important consequences for the printing date of the Second Quarto of *Hamlet*. Of its seven extant copies three bear the date 1604 and four have the date 1605 and the natural inference has generally been that James Roberts, the printer of Q_2, printed it late in the year 1604, the 1605 copies being printed early in 1605. The truth of the matter is, however, that for James Roberts there would have been no point in printing copies with the date 1605 if he was printing the play before 25 March 1605. What happened was that only the 1605 copies were printed after 24 March 1605. Shakespeare and Dekker were busy with their manuscripts practically simultaneously early in 1605, with Shakespeare preparing his manuscript for the press and Dekker writing his pamphlet.

That the practice of using until 24 March the old year date after the first of January was a normal one with Elizabethans, appears not only from the letter writers of the period and the dating they used, but also, and more importantly, from the practice of clerks and document drafters. Thus John Heminges, one of Shakespeare's fellow actors, was paid on "vltimo die Februar' 1603" for presenting plays before His Majesty, and so the reference is inevitably to King James and to February 1604.[6] As to the printers, they, too, were constantly using old style dating in their dealings with the Stationers' Company. An entry relating to a *Hamlet* romance story was entered on a day when *Hamlet* Q_2 itself might have been entered. On "ultimo ffebruarij" was entered "The firste and Second partes of the famous history of Evoradanus prince of Denmarke with his aduentures and fortune in love."[7] This "Shakespeare novel," as E.A.J. Honigmann[8] called it, cashed in on the popularity of *Hamlet*.[9] The pages of the Register have at the top of each page an inscription which records the year and also the monarch's year of reign. On top of the page with the above-quoted Stationers' Register entry we find "1604. 2° regis," which is clear enough. We are still in the second year of James's reign, namely from 25 March 1604 to 24 March 1605 and since the entry opens with "ultimo ffebruarij" the year is obviously 1605 and not 1604, although the latter year date was used by the original compilers of the Stationers' Register. For printers' purposes, too, the year began on 25 March so that the use of the two dates in the copies of *Hamlet* Q_2 shows conclusively that the three surviving copies with the 1604 year date were actually printed in 1605 before 25 March.

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[5] The phrase is D.H. Willson's in his book *King James VI and I* (1956; repr. London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 165.

[6] See *Dramatic Records in the Declared Accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber 1558-1642*, ed. D. Cook and F.P. Wilson (Malone Society Collections, 1961-62), VI, 39.

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[7] See *Stationers' Register*, ed. E. Arber (London, 1876), III, 283.

[8] See *Shakespeare's Impact on His Contemporaries* (London: Macmillan, 1982) p. 47.

[9] It is certainly worth pointing out that the only existing copy of the romance of the "prince of Denmark" has a different wording: it reads *Euordanus* instead of *Evoradanus* and then continues "With the strange Aduentures of Iago Prince of Saxonie: And of both theyr seuerall fortunes in Loue." See Gunnar Sjogren, "Danish Royalty in Elizabethan fiction" in *Hamlet the Dane* (Lund: C.W. Gleerup, 1983), pp. 108-119.

A Note on *Hamlet* 4.3.60 and "Stabs the King"

CHARLES HAINES

At 4.3.60 all readily available editions of *Hamlet* have "Exeunt all but the King,"[1] or "Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern,"[2] and the King then reveals to only the audience that the letters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern will carry to England are to "effect, / The present death of Hamlet." That "exeunt" stage-direction appears in none of the good Quartos or the Folios. Theobald borrowed it from the Bad Quarto—where the King's words that follow it are very different from those in the *textus receptus*—and most editors since have silently incorporated it. Re-suppress Theobald's "Exeunt," keep Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on stage until the end of 4.3, and the audience will see and hear that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern learn from the King himself that their errand is to convey the Prince, their friend, to his death.[3] Thus we know, and they know, that they are guilty creatures, though Hamlet may only suspect it. It follows that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not only metaphorically hoist with their own petard: the death they agree to procure turns out to be, in fact, their own. Hamlet does not kill Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They kill themselves. Had they been honest, had they resolved, out of love for Hamlet, not to deliver the letter they knew to be fatal, they would not themselves have died.

Granville-Barker ("There is no hint that they knew of its contents"), Levin ("secret orders"), and Campbell and Quinn ("usually regarded as treacherous fellows . . . nothing in the text . . . that they are acting from anything but the best motives') stumble over this point, as does Bradley ("text does not decide . . . whether the two courtiers were aware of the contents of the commission they bore to England"). But the text at its truest does decide. Shakespeare has built a better play than Theobald; and it must be clear that the death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is an under-plot parallel of the death of Claudius. Hamlet does not, in Act 5, kill Claudius by brutally running him through. He only lightly nicks him with the poisoned sword. He compels him to drink the wine. It is Hamlet's last putting of someone to the test: the Ghost, Ophelia, finally Claudius. If Claudius has not dropped poison on the sword, or in the cup, he will not die. But he has and he does. It is Claudius, not Hamlet, that kills Claudius.

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[1] See, e.g., *The Arden Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982).

[2] E.g., *Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. G.B. Harrison (New York: Hargourt Brace, 1968). However phrased, these stage-directions are intended to leave the King alone on the stage.

[3] Encouraged by the last stage-direction (line 56) in the scene, which is, in all Qq and Ff not "Exeunt" but "Exit," a wise director would probably follow both the letter of the scene and the spirit of Hamlet's two mock-friends by having Rosencrantz and Guildenstern drift upstage toward an exit at line 60, having been waved away by the King, where they skulk and spy, and at line 71 sneak offstage before the King sees them and before he quits the stage himself. The gist of the matter remains that there is no authentic "Exeunt" supplied at line 60.

A stage-direction, again, comes into it. In the Folio, when Hamlet says in 5.2 "Venom to thy work," the stage-direction is "Hurts the King." Jenkins, in his recent Arden edition, changes this to the rougher and more vague "Wounds the King" (though Claudius quickly says "I am but hurt"). Bevington and Evans, in their editions, have (Rowe's) "Stabs the King"; and several critics become even more bloodthirsty. George R. Elliott says "Hamlet thrusts the poisoner through and through." Schücking has Hamlet fall on Claudius with berserker rage. Charles Shattuck reports that Booth plunged his foil through the King's neck twice.

But he didn't; and the point is not unimportant. Hamlet must simply, as the Folio stage-direction says he does, hurt the King; and the King's own poison will do the rest. Now the resolution of the play takes on a different colour. It cannot be argued that Hamlet is punished with death for having killed Ophelia's and Laertes's father: Polonius was an intruder in the Queen's apartment and was attacked as any trespasser might be—perhaps still today. Claudius dies at his own hands, not Hamlet's. He dies very much as he had caused his brother to die: by injected poison. Claudius's crime was its own punishment, as was that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Laertes admits his was. All are dispatched by their own evil, the perfection of *lex talionis*. The request of the Ghost, whether the Ghost is moral, devilish, or a neutral apparition, has been satisfied. Hamlet dies innocent.

It follows from this that *Hamlet* is a more lively, more witty play than it is often shown to be. The death of Claudius is a bitterly clever event, a welcome turning of the wheel full circle. The play presents a nearly joyful solution to the problem of revenge. Crime is made to return directly upon its inventors, and punishment devised that perfectly fits the crime because it *is* the crime. Such is the tale of the excellent magistrate that Horatio has truly to deliver. *Hamlet* is a revenge drama and it is also a tragedy. Undeserved punishment for a crime not committed is great drama and high tragic irony. Not unlike Oedipus, Hamlet dimly senses that he was doomed before he was born. He works a wise and moral solution to the problem of revenge, but for him the wages of virtue is death. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Suppress Theobald and Rowe, and *Hamlet* will have at its centre a charming, tough, intelligent, lively, active man who out-talks and out-manoeuvres everyone around him, in a pell-mell royal detective story, and is at last tripped up by a water-fly, a lap-wing; and goes in to his unexpected death with a little jingle-rhyme on his lips:

> . . . say you are not fit.
> Not a whit.

Hamlet in the Theatre

MARVIN ROSENBERG

Hamlet can hardly be staged without new insights into the functioning of the play, as evidenced by the contributions that follow.

When lucky University teachers of Shakespeare are called upon to act as dramaturgs for productions of the play, as happened with the first two reports that follow, we can count on them to be alert to patterns of character, action, and visual as well as verbal imagery.

Thus H.P. Coursen, of Bowdoin College, who served as dramaturg with the Monmouth Theatre in Maine:

> The basic context of the production allowed for a focus on the reiterated tableau of the prone and dying king — King Hamlet dispatched by Claudius, Priam by Pyrrhus, Gonzago by Lucianus, and Claudius by Hamlet. By shaping these separate moments in similar ways, the director created visual links for the audience, bringing seemingly unconnected and generically distinct elements into relationship with each other.
>
> I edited the text towards its in-built metaphor of theater, "actions that a man might play," and tried to establish a rhythm that builds toward that moment when Prince Hamlet — *not* Claudius—interrupts the "Murder of Gonzago" and allows Claudius to flee the throne room and leave the impression that he has been insulted — even threatened — by his proclaimed heir. The production suggested that Hamlet failed to achieve his own fullest vision of his own dramatic production—to force Claudius to public confession. In spite of Hamlet's elation at the end of "Gonzago," he does not capture Horatio's corroboration either. Horatio is noncommittal. At the end of the scene, Hamlet's elation collapses. He looks at Horatio as if to say, "I blew it, didn't I?" Although Horatio tends to agree, his sympathy for his princely friend is perhaps stronger here than it has been. It follows that the "Prayer Scene" be allowed to pursue its full dimensions, as Claudius explores the inner issues that Hamlet's play might have elicited from the King publicly, if involuntarily. He *has* been "struck to the soul," but Hamlet has missed the opportunity to force Claudius's penitential imperative to explode outward into a "proclaiming of malefaction." On the basis of an obviously debatable principle of editing, I left in

> Claudius's tortured comment ("Oh 'tis too true! / How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!") to suggest *before* "Gonzago" that Claudius's soul is indeed ripe for release. It follows also that I left in references to corrupted ritual — the Ghost's complaint about the denial of last rites to him, the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who die "not shriving time allow'd," and the "maimed rites" of Ophelia's funeral — to suggest a world alienated from positive contact with spiritual forces, a world yearning for the full possibilities of "Gonzago" to be realized. The potentiality of the play-within is not realized, and therein lies much of the tragedy. Hamlet fails in his dual mission to revenge *and* to set right the time, a task capable of fulfillment only in his plans for a play, where he, at last and for the only time, controls the deceptive surfaces of appearance that have deceived him and that will thwart him again, once he has dashed his "comedy." An already fallen world ("an unweeded garden") plunges further, towards the destiny of the two grave-yard scenes in Act Five.

Dunbar Ogden, of the University of California, acted as dramaturg for several seasons with the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival (in Berkeley, California), which stages the plays in a natural amphitheatre. Ogden reports a different visual pattern which employs an echoing theatrical moment in the 1978 production of *Hamlet* directed by George Kovach.

> When in Act 1, scene 5, the Ghost described his murder to young Hamlet, he—a large, military figure — stood centre stage right behind his son, both of them facing full front. The Ghost suddenly placed his armor-gloved hands on either side of Hamlet's head, tilted his head to one side, and spoke into Hamlet's ear, pouring in the message of poison.
>
> Sleeping within my orchard,
> My custom always of the afternoon,
> Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole
> With juice of cursed hebona in a vial,
> And in the porches of my ears did pour
> The leperous distilment . . . .
> (1.5.59-64)
>
> As Kovach and I went through the play, line by line, before casting and rehearsing began, we agreed that in their opening confrontation young Hamlet identifies with his father; that is, he feels the poison, and further, that the Ghost should present to the audience not a spooky wraith, not an empty face and a sepulchral voice, but here out of doors

a large, powerful, domineering — if not overwhelming — armed man. The audience should feel toward the Ghost something of what Hamlet feels. The Ghost is very real and very present. We agreed to search for a visual translation for some of the Ghost's Senecan rhetoric. Kovach thought up the gesture.

Later on, in Act 5, the director repeated it twice, creating a special *memento mori.* Here Hamlet took Yorick's skull between his hands and, facing full front, tilted it and for a moment spoke as the Ghost had spoken. This stage picture derived from another interpretative element upon which we had agreed. "As a kind of epigraph for the figure of Hamlet," I noted from our discussions, "we continually returned to 'Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times.' Hamlet has two spiritual fathers: Yorick, the jester, and Old Hamlet, the craggy warrior."

Finally, as Hamlet was dying — face up on the downstage floor — Horatio knelt just behind him and lifted Hamlet's upper body to rest against his own chest. With "the rest is silence," Hamlet's head tilted over to one side, and, as in the preceding parallel moments, his mouth fell open slightly.

Antony Landon, Turku University, Finland, has acted Hamlet, directed the play, and studied it as scholar-critic-teacher. His extensive experience of it enriches this account of his staging of Act 1, Scene 1 at his University:

Who's there?

I cannot now remember exactly how we staged this in some of the earlier productions, but the conviction has grown upon me that the only intelligent way of doing it is by having considerable *silent action before* Bernardo shouts—or screams in terror as I think—"Who's there?" The thing is greatly helped by having two levels: indeed I think the play as a whole cries out for the use of two levels. In our *Hamlet* we used the central aula of the university here, which gave us something like "Elizabethan" conditions and there was of course no curtain. We began with music: everything dark; lights slowly came up as the music faded. Francisco was at his post at the highest level (there were really 3 levels because of a bend in the stairs) and Bernardo—terrified—came very slowly and silently up the steps from below stage level suggesting a very high climb; he was obviously in a cold sweat. The audience, but

> not B., could see the shadowy figure of Francisco on the highest "platform." F. paces slowly into darkness away from B. while B. continues to mount the steps, looking, looking in the darkness. Then, as F. returns into the dim light B. catches sight of him, *mistaking him for the ghost.* "Who's there?" is thus a terrified scream (perhaps a terrified *whisper,* but that's difficult) and it hardly matters whether the audience actually grasps the words. The mood, if not all the sense, is established in what I would almost like to call a sound effect. A modern production has the advantage of lighting if it really is one: the best and greatest Shakespearean effects are always tremendous without lighting.

Cary Mazer (University of Pennsylvania), also an actor-director-scholar-teacher, proposes a treatment of Act 5, Scene 2, that he expects to test in rehearsal and performance when he produces *Hamlet:*

> Hamlet and Horatio have been discussing Laertes's challenge to a duel, first with Osric and then with the unnamed Lord. Hamlet's mood has been decisive, confident, perhaps a bit giddy. The Lord exits, and Horatio tries to check Hamlet's boastfulness with a note of caution: "You will lose this wager, my lord " But Hamlet is still self-confident and boastful, dancing across the stage with barely suppressable energy: "I think not so; since he went into France I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds." Hamlet suddenly stops in his tracks and clutches his nose, which has quite suddenly started to bleed. He draws a handkerchief from his cuff and quickly presses it to his nose. After a moment of charged silence, he pulls the cloth from his nose and holds it by the corners, letting it unfold before him at arm's length. The white handkerchief is spotted with a large damp stain of fresh red blood. He stares at it with the same combination of intellectual curiosity and morbid fascination with which he contemplated Yorick's skull in the graveyard; but this time, the mortality he is contemplating is, like the blood, his own. After an extended pause, he says, thinking audibly, his eyes still riveted to the large patch of blood, "Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart." Then, breaking his gaze, dropping his arms and crumpling the cloth in one hand, he adds, "but it is no matter." Horatio tries to show Hamlet that he shares the sense of dread that the nosebleed inspired; Hamlet dismisses the omen as "such a kind of gain-giving, as would perhaps trouble a woman." But when Horatio offers to have the duel cancelled, Hamlet holds the crumpled handkerchief before him, saying; "Not a whit, we defy augury. . . . " His acceptance of divine providence and his readiness to meet his fate give him the resolve to accept the omen for what it is, and to engage in the sequence of events which will bring the play, and his life, to a close.

One of the standard sources for information on Garrick's performance of Hamlet is *Lichtenberg's Visits to England, as Described in his Letters and Diaries*, as selected and translated by Mare and Quarrell. Ray Sutton, of the Liverpool College of Further Education, who has studied Garrick's Hamlet intensively, has translated the pertinent documents in Lichtenberg's *Gesammelte Werke*, and has found some details not explicit in the Mare and Quarrell version. The latter, for instance, has Hamlet waiting for the ghost on the battlements with folded arms "under his cloak." Sutton has established that Lichtenberg made a point of noting that Garrick did *not* wear a cloak there. Sutton has also provided us with a passage, absent from Mare and Quarrell, from Lichtenberg's report of a visit to Drury Lane in December, 1774:

> The ghost looked very good; the colour of his armour was practically indistinguishable from the colour of the scene, and he was already standing there quite quiet and unmoving, before I, who probably like every other spectator, had my eyes riveted on Hamlet, detected him. When Garrick sees him, he does not make a bow, as Smith once did and because of it was called Sir Hamlet, but he suddenly staggers back with buckling knees and outstretched arms and finally remains standing in this position, one leg well behind the other, with knees bent, supported by Horatio and Marcellus; thus he speaks. This depiction of shock combined with the most chilling horror, which can be experienced only by a person who sees a ghost, from whom nevertheless he expects more good than ill, produced an astonishing effect. The absolute silence of the audience intensified everything so much more that, believe me, several times a cold shiver ran through me, even before he had begun his speech. I have been told that some years ago a man in the shilling gallery thought that this was really a ghost; his neighbour told him, it was an actor, and the ghost was part of the tragedy. But, said the former, if that is so why then is the man in black (Garrick) so terrified by it himself? The way he says the words "speak—speak" to the motionless thing, finally tears himself away from his friends when it beckons him, how he threatens them "or I'll make a ghost of him that lets me," at last resolutely follows the ghost, not like a stout-hearted man following an impetuous challenger to a duel, but always like a man who follows a ghost, against which all strength and cunning avail nothing, with the kind of trepidation of a little bird, all this makes the scene proceed without your even once being aware of yourself, or of Drury-Lane, London or Garrick.

PRODUCTIONS

A Prelude to Hamlet by Samuel Sussman*

A play that begins and ends before the time frame of *Hamlet* is an appealing idea, one that several playwrights have addressed. So many questions can thus be raised: What kind of king was Hamlet's father? What was Claudius like? Were Gertrude and he lovers before the King's death? Unfortunately, Samuel Sussman's *A Prelude to Hamlet* ventures beyond the boundaries announced by its title to forage in Shakespeare's play. The author may consider his borrowings a virtue, a device stirring recognition in the audience. For me, however, when the *Prelude* appropriates scenes from *Hamlet*, it overreaches itself and collapses, because when it places itself in competition for content with the greater play, it must lose. But when it develops hints in *Hamlet* into the possible events preceding Hamlet's arrival at Elsinore, it can be imaginative and suggestive.

The *Prelude* trespasses, for example, when Polonius tells Ophelia, after reading a letter she receives from Hamlet, that the Prince is an inappropriate match for her. Such a scene occurring at this time would make the scene in *Hamlet* impossible. Sussman is on safer ground when he decides that Ophelia and Hamlet have known each other from childhood and that their love has blossomed while he is in Wittenberg. Such a conjecture is of course credible. More likely, however, Hamlet has begun to love Ophelia only upon his return to Elsinore, in the somewhat less than two months since his father's death. Otherwise, why would Laertes and Polonius become aware of it only then, considering that Ophelia is such a guileless and obedient sister and daughter?

It would be difficult to give up the idea of a newly conceived love between the recently arrived Hamlet who had been away for a few years and the recently grown-up Ophelia who had been a little girl when Hamlet left. What this suggests is that the death of Hamlet's father has not shattered him so much that he cannot fall in love. His depression, then, when we first see him, is caused not by his father's death but by his mother's remarriage.

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* *A Prelude to Hamlet* by Samuel Sussman. Cast: Everard, Demetrius, and Lucius, courtiers, the latter in love with Ophelia; Polonius, Lord Chamberlain; Ophelia, Polonius's daughter; Horvendile, King of Denmark; Gertrude, Queen of Denmark; Claudius, Horvendile's younger brother; Yorick the Younger, the Fool and a son of the Yorick of Hamlet's childhood; Fortinbras, Prince of Norway; Roderick, Fortinbras's officer; Cassandra, Fortinbras's sister; Nestor, Fortinbras's uncle. Information about the play may be obtained from Bertha Klausner, International Literary Agency, Inc., 71 Park Avenue, New York City, USA. Telephone: (212) 685-2642.

Another example of trespassing in the *Prelude* is the Fortinbras episode, a major portion of Sussman's play. *Hamlet* has Fortinbras's uncle ill and ignorant of Fortinbras's plans for conquest; the *Prelude* has this uncle recover from illness and arrive at the Danish court to announce that Fortinbras will give up his idea of single combat with Hamlet and will go into Poland to collect "back taxes" for Denmark. Fortinbras becomes a Laertes-like figure after his sister Cassandra, an addition of Sussman's, drowns herself, Ophelia-like.

This latter borrowing is, however, more acceptable, because Cassandra, the intended bride of Hamlet and promised peace-weaver between Denmark and Norway, is presented as Ophelia's double in looks and desires. Already mad when she enters, always silent, Cassandra commits suicide because of Hamlet's continued absence and her interpretation that he does not love her, coupled with sorrow over the death of her father (only a few years before, not thirty as the gravedigger in *Hamlet* asserts, 5.1.126,143). Her suicide is both a foreshadowing of and inspiration for Ophelia's.

Most interesting are the characterizations of Horvendile (Hamlet's father, the name and the characterization inspired by Saxo Grammaticus's account of *Amleth*), Claudius and Gertrude, because these are drawn from suggestions in *Hamlet*. The ghost in *Hamlet* comes in armor, indicating the former king's war-like nature; the king in the *Prelude* is a pirate who lives by conquest. To him, strength, daring and violence are a man's chief virtues. He is one-dimensional, but a handsome, rash and ruthless man whose love for Hamlet probably would have been reciprocated. The *Prelude* intimates the ambivalence that Hamlet might feel about avenging his father's death, since Hamlet is more like Claudius than like his father.

In *Hamlet*, Claudius as King puts diplomacy before conquest; Claudius in the *Prelude* is a scholar, a chemist (explaining the poison) and a reasonable man who believes in patience and hope, in letting fate unwind as it must. Although in love with Gertrude, he is too honorable to be an adulterer. Finally, goaded by a determined Gertrude, he pours poison in the King's ear. Gertrude had drugged Horvendile to make the killing possible for the weaker Claudius, whose position had become untenable after he had openly disobeyed Horvendile in failing to fetch Hamlet home from Wittenberg.

Like the Gertrude of *Hamlet*, the Queen is both sensuous and loving. Gertrude's motives for murder are triple: hatred for her overbearing husband (whose behavior contradicts the description of his love for her in *Hamlet*, 1.2.140-42); love for the gentle, kind, wise Claudius; and most importantly, fear for her son whom the King wishes, first, to send to war in Poland and, second, to submit to single combat with the seasoned Fortinbras. The King, of course, does not anticipate making a sacrifice of Hamlet, because he has confidence in Hamlet's ability, but Gertrude foresees Hamlet's death as the certain result.

At the end of the *Prelude* its chief point has been driven home: violence breeds violence. Claudius, having killed his brother must now also kill his brother's henchman. He has as surely embarked on the fatal journey to vile murder and ultimate self-destruction as Macbeth had upon murdering Duncan.

In sum, so long as the *Prelude* draws its inferences from *Hamlet* and fleshes them out, it is an absorbing commentary on Shakespeare's play. But when it pre-empts lines and scenes from *Hamlet*, it conflates two separate visions, obscuring rather than edifying or delighting.

BERNICE W. KLIMAN

Hamlet and the Players : Jacobi and the Television Audience

In the recent BBC production of *Hamlet*, featuring Derek Jacobi in the title role, the text of the play-within-the-play scene (3.2. 1-295)[1] has been carefully edited to reduce the playing time. Some eighty-four lines (just under thirty percent) have been excised. None of the omissions, however, significantly affects the meaning of the scene—thirty lines of Hamlet's advice to the players, ten lines of his conversation with Horatio, ten lines from the Player-Queen, twenty-two lines from the Player-King, twelve lines of conversation between Hamlet and Horatio just after Claudius has departed. Perhaps only Lily Bess Campbell would have seriously objected, since the deleted lines of the Player-King are among those central to her argument for Hamlet as a man whose sanguine humour grief has transformed into melancholy adust.[2]

My major concern is with the dramatic perspective of the lines that do remain, the angle of vision (or, more correctly, the angles of vision) through which the spectators, in this case the television viewers, observe and experience the action. And to get at this point I need for a moment to consider action antecedent to the actual play-within-the-play scene.

From the beginning of the production there is a tendency for Jacobi to step out of character during Hamlet's soliloquies. Instead of our eavesdropping or seeming to overhear the protagonist's inner thoughts as a part of the ongoing action, Hamlet here talks directly to the audience (the camera), functioning somewhat like a chorus to lead and direct. This tendency to stand outside and comment on the action appears to be exacerbated by the arrival of the players and the extended discussion of stagecraft. As he calls for a passionate speech from one of the players, his thoughts, whether by accident or coincidence, fly to a son's killing a king to revenge the death of a father (the killing of Priam by Achilles's son Pyrrhus); and, as Jacobi performs the role, it is, in fact, Hamlet who first breaks into stage declamation, broadly performing thirteen lines of Aeneas for an audience consisting of Polonius, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, the player—all of whom applaud politely—and of course for the viewer. Following the completion of the speech by the player, who picks it up after the first thirteen lines, Hamlet—still obviously thinking of a father's murder and a son's obligation—arranges for the playing of *The Murder of Gonzago* the next night and for the insertion of "some dozen . . . or sixteen lines" (2 2. 541-42). While in most productions Hamlet arranges the play as a test of Claudius's guilt and along with Horatio sits back and observes the king's reaction with occasional quips and asides, in Jacobi's version the playlet becomes more demonstrably Hamlet's production, one in which he takes an active—almost a quasi-acting—role.

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[1] Line references are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

[2] *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1930), p. 109.

Hamlet comes forward on stage during his lines following the player's speech on Priam's slaughter (the "rogue and peasant slave" soliloquy), speaking directly to the camera in almost intimate terms. Then, continuing to chide himself for lack of action, he again falls into an actor's role, addressing first one, then the other, side of an imaginary audience. Screaming "Bloody, bawdy villain! Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain," he draws his sword and strikes the air as he observes that both heaven and hell are *prompting* him to his revenge. The interesting thing here is that Jacobi's Hamlet has begun to visualize his revenge almost as a stage role—or at least as one that can be articulated and in a sense forced into realization through such an enactment.

We are well prepared, then, for a production of the play-within-the-play scene in which Hamlet takes an unusually active part. The scene opens with Hamlet's applying makeup to the Player-Queen, concerned that the illusion be correct and intensive. To this end, in the manner of conducting an offstage conference moments before the action, he sits with the players in a group, encouraging them to speak their lines properly and to suit their actions to the words—to hold the "mirror up to nature" (3.2. 22) so as to show "scorn her own image." If the first player clearly indicates that he considers the advice gratuitous, he nonetheless accepts it with good grace, just as he later bears Hamlet's actual interpolations in a way that makes them appear almost integral to the action.

Hamlet is passive during the dumb show, but close-up shots sustain the tension as he vacillates, on the one hand, between apprehension that the plot will too soon be revealed and the effect diluted and, on the other, close attention to Claudius's and Gertrude's response. Clearly this production does not follow John Dover Wilson's well-known and generally accepted suggestion that the royal pair are so involved in conversation and the general business of settling down that they do not watch the dumb show.[3] To the contrary, in this production they carefully observe every move and Hamlet is not a little perplexed that he can perceive no response beyond their confident and relaxed smile—not even to the implication in the dumb show that the Queen conspired in the death of the King by placing the poison vial on the sleeping body for the villain's easy access. This daring subtextual touch, presumably arranged by Hamlet himself or at the very least with his knowledge and consent, clearly is intended to place an increased pressure upon the Queen in these moments of grim pantomime. Close shots juxtapose Hamlet's mounting concern and the royal couple's enigmatic facial expressions; and his agitated comment, "We shall know all by this fellow," is spoken as he remains in place in the audience by Ophelia's side.

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[3] *What Happens in Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1935), pp. 159-60.

As the play proper begins and as the Player-Queen vows never to wed again should the King die ("In second husband let me accurs'd! / None wed the second but who kill'd the first"), it is Gertrude, quite understandably, who first loses her composure—the smile and the blood draining momentarily from her face as Hamlet and Horatio stare intently. Again the series of film close-ups intensify this scene in a subtle way simply not available to the stage. That Gertrude first reacts noticeably to the suggestions in the play lends greater force to Hamlet's pointed question—"Madam, how like you this play?"—and to her somewhat addled response—"The lady doth protest too much, methinks." Hamlet at this moment literally rushes onto the stage within a stage, standing among the actors as he explains the source of the play to Claudius and assures him that there is "no offence i' th' world" in it. He orders Lucianus to cease posturing and to begin his speech, later exclaiming, as the potion is poured in the Player-King's ear, that the villain "poisons him i' th' garden for his estate" and soon will get his wife. Claudius rises, far more in self-control than in most productions, and in one of the most chilling scenes walks slowly and deliberately to Hamlet, calls for a torch, raises it, and stares directly into his nephew's face as he sadly shakes his head. Hamlet, meanwhile, covers his face—either to shut out the light or perhaps even to protect his face from the flame and what for a moment he considers a threat; then he giggles in a manner somewhere between nervousness and delight that through the play he has finally flushed the truth from Claudius.

Except for his calling for music, as if he were responsible for directing the entertainment that normally follows the production of a play, and the brief entrance of the recorder players a few lines later, there is no further reference to either the inner stage or the actors. But the perspective of the scene has become richly multifaceted. Hamlet at one moment functions as a choric figure to his own plot line, at another as a director moving in and out of the action of the play-within-the-play, at another as a protagonist whose interaction with the King and Queen is dictated by their response to the inner play. The spectators or viewers observe Hamlet in these multiple roles, they of course from their higher level of awareness since they must interpret all of this through their own perceptions of the conflicting emotions in Hamlet and the impact of his actions on the surrounding characters. Hamlet the actor-director, then, adds yet another dimension to the multiple perspectives of the scene.

Such a highly metadramatic conceptualization serves effectively to intensify the fragmentation of Hamlet's personality in the first four acts. At the risk of oversimplification, the difference between the character prior to his sea voyage and that of the final act is that in Act 5 Hamlet is a man prepared to face the fortunes of life with both consistency and conviction; his actions move almost predictably toward the final confrontation between uncle and nephew in which, already fatally wounded, he will find the provocation to accomplish a vengeance whose moral justification he now flatly takes for granted. It is true that he has achieved this conviction far too late to save himself either from moral stain or physical harm; his rash impetuosity which resulted in Polonius's death has long since marked him for destruction.[4] But the Hamlet of the end of the final act of the play is a man of undivided mind and philosophy; his actions and his thoughts—as expressed in dialague with Horatio and others—are of a piece.

The earlier Hamlet sorely lacks this coherence of personality.[5] In one scene he is profoundly concerned with the moral implications of murder despite the apparent justification; in another he is disturbed at the possibility that the ghost (and hence the justification) be false; at another he possesses a fire-eyed determination to strike down the tyrant king whatever the ramifications spiritual or political; in another he ponders turning the knife against himself rather than face these cruelly enigmatic issues; in another his words reflect an awesome frenzy not far short of madness.

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[4] Certainly it is an overstatement to describe Hamlet as a "Black Priest" who—his "Natural Conscience" drowned—is minister of the poisoned chalice (Roy W. Battenhouse, *Shakespearean Tragedy* [Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1969], pp. 222, 250, 257-60). Instead, "blinded by pride" (G.R. Elliott, *Scourge and Minister* [Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1951], p. 108), he has become "contaminated by his world" (Helen Gardner, *The Business of Criticism* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959], p. 47); escape without stain is impossible from such a dilemma which, "by definition, is an all but unresolvable choice between evils" (Harry Levin, *The Question of Hamlet* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959], p. 105).

[5] "The play's hero stands between a Christian, medieval world of fate, and one of skeptical uncertainty" (David Bevington, ed., *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Hamlet* [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968], p. 12). The play mirrors the full intrigues of the Renaissance court (John W. Draper, *The Hamlet of Shakespeare's Audience* [Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1939], p. 13); it reflects allegorically the political destiny of Essex, Southampton, Bothwell, and James I (Lillian Winstanley, *Hamlet and the Scottish Succession* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1921], p. 172); the hero's delay as an instrument of policy is analogous to Queen Elizabeth's vacillation (William Empson, "Hamlet When New," *Sewanee Review*, 61 [1953], 17).

While actors, in order to achieve a coherence of personality, usually seize upon the angry young man, or the melancholy Dane, or the moralist, or the incipient madman, the truth is that Hamlet paradoxically is all of these faces; and in the first four acts he cannot be reduced to a single complexion without distortion and oversimplification.[6] By forcing Hamlet out of his role in the soliloquies and in the play-within-the-play scene and into a position of actor-director, Jacobi prompts the viewers to examine with him the nature and motivation of characters on a stage who like pawns can be manipulated for predesigned effects. Above all, Jacobi objectifies the figure of Hamlet himself, and the complexity of his character is compounded by the theatrical ambiguities resonating between the actor's energetic gamesmanship and the revenger's deadly and implacable design.

Jacobi's Hamlet, in a word, underscores those elements in the play by which Shakespeare forces the spectators from the role of passive observer to active critic; they themselves must put together the pieces of the puzzle in order to provide the answers or assumptions which the play itself refuses to yield; the "experience of the audience on the stage (which includes all the *dramatis personae*) is shared by that in the theatre."[7] The spectators, for example, must ultimately decide for themselves the question of Hamlet's sanity at any given point in the eleven of fifteen scenes in which he appears through 4.4. They must determine the extent of Gertrude's guilt and the son's precise attitude toward both her and that guilt; they must draw their own conclusions concerning the nature of Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia; in the early scenes at least they must determine whether Hamlet's hesitation to move against the king is occasioned by moral fortitude, physical or psychological incapacity, personal vindictiveness, sincere doubt, or arrant cowardice—whether, for example, Hamlet's moral impasse is the accidental by-product of Shakespeare's placing the pagan concept of revenge within the frame of Christian morality, or whether Shakespeare deliberately juxtaposes the two systems to produce just such an enigma.

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[6] Among the myriad claims, Hamlet is a victim of melancholy (A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* [London: Macmillan, 1904], pp. 100 ff.), lacking courage and resolution (the romantic view of Goethe, Hazlitt, Schlegal, and Coleridge) as a result of his "over-cultivated imagination" (E.K. Chambers, *Shakespeare: A Survey* [London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1925], p. 182); he is unable to kill the "man who [as Gertrude's lover] shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realized" (Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 4th ed. [London: Allen and Unwin, 1915], IV 266; Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* [New York: Norton, 1949], p. 100); he is a woman in disguise (E.P. Vining, *The Mystery of Hamlet* [Philadelphia, 1881]).

[7] T. McAlindon, "Indecorum in Hamlet," *Shakespeare Studies*, 5 (1969), 78. See also McAlindon's *Shakespeare and Decorum* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973). Hamlet's personality takes shape in terms of its confrontations with the other inhabitants of the *Hamlet*-world (Bernard McElroy, *Shakespeare's Mature Tragedies* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973], p. 67),

If the paramount aim of any actor who undertakes the role is, with theatrical credibility, to augment and intensify the continuing mystery of Hamlet prior to his sea change, this BBC production successfully meets the challenge; and the play-within-the play scene stands as an emblem of its methodology. Jacobi's Player-King performs before a usurper-king at the instigation of an aspirant-king who himself assumes a player's role for an audience composed both of those on stage and those in the television audience. Such a production prompts the viewer, like Maynard Mack thirty years earlier, to ask where the playing ends and reality begins: "Which *are* the guilty creatures sitting at a play? When is an act not an 'act'?"[8]

LARRY S. CHAMPION

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[8] "The World of *Hamlet*," *Yale Review*, 41 (1952), 514.

CRITICAL FORUM

("No, no, they do but jest—poison in jest.
No offence i' th' world")

The Pathology of Errors

Professor Raymond Southall's article begins with his casting a coldly sceptical look at something that has so far passed as a merit of *Hamlet*: its perennial and inexhaustible fascination (*HSt*, Summer 1981). The interest he thus excites, however, quickly evaporates because of his peevish and strained interpretation. He proceeds by resisting grimly the play's poetry and before long finds an answer to the mystery of the play's appeal. The secret, it transpires, lies not with the Prince, but with the unwary reader who gets hooked on a peculiarly inflationary poetic language — a language that appears to suggest a lot more than it really delivers. Once we grasp the fundamental hollowness of the language, Professor Southall goes on with remorseless logic, we have no difficulty in realising that the play is a shameful fraud with a beguiling exterior. He finds a close parallel in the impoverished poetic language of the poetry of the Romantic Revival, especially in the poetry of Shelley as read by F.R. Leavis. We have, it seems, the same magniloquence, the same grand gestures without substance, the same proneness to suggestiveness without precision, betraying in effect a similar corruption of sensibility.

Oddly enough, when the parallel is traced to its source, the headlong rush of Professor Southall's denunciation no longer seems adequate. Leavis's condemnation of Shelley is forceful and severe, but it is on an altogether higher level than Southall's reductive dismissal. Leavis is forced to concede:

> It would be perverse to end without recognizing that he achieved memorable things in modes of experience that were peculiarly congenial to the European mind in that phase of its history and are of permanent value.[1]

And this grudging admission raises a fresh problem that Leavis does not care to examine. If the poetry of Shelley bears elements that are of permanent value, a patient and thorough scrutiny of such elements is quite in order. For all the weaknesses of his poetry, Shelley had certainly risen far above the sentimentalism of the late eighteenth century. The source of his strength, if we consider the matter without prejudice, will turn out to be his revolutionary sympathies. But a moot point is the scope for realising these revolutionary aspirations in the profoundly reactionary milieu in which Shelley found himself. The revolutionary impulse remains in him, but it finds no objective social outlet, except in one or two cases mentioned by Leavis himself. That he is not rooted in tradition is the least of his troubles. The problem is that he is eventually led to dissolve his revolutionary vision in "airs and fires" of nebulous luminosity. Indeed I feel tempted to take a leaf out of Professor Southall's own book and speculate whether *Hamlet* does not foreshadow the predicament of a man dedicated to reforming his society, but both infected by and alienated from it. In any case it won't do to trace the appeal of *Hamlet* to mere decadence.

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[1] F.R. Leavis, *Revaluation* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), p. 230,

Regarding *Hamlet*, Leavis refers to the political dimension of the play. Hamlet is deeply concerned with the public impact of his role and the public import of the events in which he is involved. He is not settling a private score, but restoring order to a disordered state and society. The idea behind staging the play to detect the king's guilt is not a vindictive whim, but the offering of ocular proof to a witness, i.e. Horatio. That is why towards the end he prevents the faithful Horatio's attempt at suicide: Horatio must live to "tell my story" and clear his "wounded name."

Professor Southall does everything in his power to deny the complexity and sureness of touch in the play. To him Hamlet's soliloquy "O that this too too solid flesh would melt" is an epitome of the malady from which the play itself suffers. The soliloquy is a vision of life being strangled by its own waste fertility, and that is precisely what happens to Hamlet according to Professor Southall. The logical (or rather, *illogical*) links in this argument are weak, if skillfully forged. Consider the steps:

> The poetry of Hamlet tends towards grand but vague gesture; it is doubtless very evocative, but what attitudes and feelings are evoked are amorphous (p. 8).

> That the poetry raises vague expectations only to frustrate them, dissolving them into rhetoric, a rhetoric which serves to sprinkle a few jaded platitudes, is what, I think, is so disturbing . . . . How much of the Prince is composed of rhetoric, rant, verbal play and portentous utterance!" (p. 11).

The play, in other words, glances at that over-elaboration that chokes life in waste fertility. Similarly the rant and verbal play express the "thought-sick" and fevered condition that "like the hectic" rages in the blood (p. 12).

Professor Southall is not clear as to what extent the play *betrays* such symptoms and to what extent it *deals* with them. But he pursues the theme with single-minded zeal. It seems that the inflationary rhetoric marks the characterization not only of Hamlet but of most other characters in the play as well (p. 11). The play begins with an immense but imprecise portent and ends with another vision of unfounded grandeur, and the interval is filled with "erratic incidents, verbal play, and such set speeches as Claudius's advice to Hamlet, Laertes's advice to Ophelia, Polonius's advice to Laertes, Hamlet's advice to the players, his soliloquies and ranting in Ophelia's grave" (p. 9). This impatient and supercilious cataloguing is offered as a perceptive new reading of the play, whereas it resolves a mystery by deflating it. It does not stand up to an honest response to the play.

How accurate is Professor Southall's view that Hamlet scatters mere platitudes in his reflective moods? Hamlet of course is temperamentally given to brooding, and he seizes on every opportunity to launch into a generalised discourse. But it is also a commonplace of *Hamlet* criticism that those remarks of his cannot be separated from his purely personal problems. It is circumstances rather than his temperament that trigger off these discourses, whether to himself or to others. Hamlet accepts his task or mission with resolution. Indeed it is confirmed by his own earlier premonitions. "O my prophetic soul!" he cries at the Ghost's revelation in 1,5, and earlier, in 1, 2, he murmurs at the strange news he receives from his friends: "All is not well. I doubt some foul play." Yet he finds the execution of the task beset by painful personal dilemmas as well as insurmountable obstacles. He is hardly in a position to sail straightway into action. The necessarily slow progress of his plans and the periods of forced idleness drive him frantic with the anxiety that he may not succeed. He is also troubled by thoughts or doubts about the ultimate value of action in a world where man's knowledge is not certain and where death and decay overtake everything. Indeed the situation in which he finds himself impels him to consider some general questions of human life, such as the proper relationship between passion and reason, custom and reason, action and contemplation, rebellion and conformity, freewill and fate, man's greatness and his littleness: all Renaissance commonplaces, but commonplaces that elicited the deepest responses from the outstanding thinkers of that age. Some of these concerns survive into our own age and sometimes give the play a startlingly contemporary flavour. The platitudes are thus less shopworn than Professor Southall would have us believe.

The general statements that Hamlet delivers are in fact less crucial than the dilemmas from which he seeks refuge in them. There is a major and enduring Shakespearean concern that quite a few plays exemplify: a sense of radical disjunction between the world of real life and the world of thought, value and purpose. In the so-called history plays the demands of politics are in radical contrast with those of normal humanity. Political machiavellism triumphs over intellectual idealism in *Julius Caesar*. In *Hamlet* the serene, far-sighted percipience of contemplation, which is yet impotent of effect on the actual course of events, is set over against action that must accept uncertainties and must incur guilt. The cruel dilemma is underlined in Hamlet's patently absurd tribute to Fortinbras finding "honour in a straw" as well as in his praise of the player's imaginary passion. The supposed platitudes thus hide a paradox.

Even the specific examples Professor Southall attempts to analyse contain secrets they refuse to yield to his blunt approach. The "To be, or not to be" soliloquy tells us more about Hamlet's personal situation than we usually bother to discover. The endless revolving of possibilities without any progress of thought dramatically express his bewilderment, confusion and worry, which stop short of a conclusion. It is thus the stasis of will that generates the sickness of heart, and not vice versa, contrary to conventional opinion.

Underneath the even flow of generalities in this soliloquy there is the undertow of personal feeling. The fond, caressing lingering on "To die, to sleep," reiterated in course of the passage, the reckless abandon of the desire for self-extinction, full-throated in the long vowels of "Devoutly" in "tis a consummation/Devoutly to be wish'd," and the emphatic note of "bare bodkin" reveal in glimpses the emotional direction behind the march of platitudes. This strong craving is frustrated at every turn by the fear of non-being, which is metaphysical rather than religious.

Yet Hamlet refuses to take a commissar-like view of his private life. His private self is precious to him, and its value increases in inverse proportion to his political frustrations. Considered in the background peculiar to the story, this concern for the self does not appear sick. This is the root of his obssession with death as nothingness. This also accounts for his burden of guilt: he is still too much involved with the person his duty compels him to condemn to death. The vile king is his mother's husband. But by the end of the play he has, through his experiences, attained to a view of life and death where both dying and killing, and the consequent guilt, are accepted with equanimity. This frame of mind is neither fatalism nor despair. It produces a calm resolution to act. I cannot help recalling here the great Sanskrit classic, the *Geeta*, where we discover Arjuna demoralised by a glimpse of the guilt he has to incur for performing *his* duty and giving to death an importance it does not quite deserve. Arjuna, like Hamlet, is cured of his selfish fears by lessons in the nature of duty and humility, against the awesome background of Time.

Professor Southall complains that the "To be, or not to be" meditation on death does not yield a single striking physical image, unlike Claudio's reaction in *Measure for Measure* (pp. 6-7). But Hamlet's situation is quite unlike that of Claudio: he is not under sentence of death, which is to him a conceptual possibility rather than an imminent danger. Arthur Koestler experienced during his imprisonment by Spanish Fascists two types of reactions to death among the condemned prisoners. One kind was untroubled by the prospect of non-existence, but reduced to fits of shivering by the horror of dying. The other group did not stand in fear of dying but were in agonies over the thought of not existing any more.[2] Hamlet's reaction is closer to that of the second group.

One cannot avoid looking back on this soliloquy from the vantage-point of the last act of the play. By that time, as critics have noted, he ceases to chafe against the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," perhaps because he begins to recognise the working of providence, of the "divinity that shapes our ends." With this recognition his behaviour and mood become more purposeful. I believe the earlier soliloquies reveal a self-centred frame of mind, for even the craving for death is a selfish craving. But after the graveyard-scene he becomes aware of death as the inevitable terminus of all human aspiration and endeavour, and is rid of his obssessively selfish demands on life. Yorick's skull poignantly dramatises his earlier abstract and bookish perception of man as the "quintessence of dust." The circumstances of his life force on him a pilgrimage away from the ideas and ideals of the Renaissance, which seem to scratch only at the surface of life.

There *is* a windy wordiness about the speeches of Hamlet, Polonius and Laertes. But Hamlet is aware of and vexed by it, unlike the rest. The general atmosphere of purposelessness and lack of candour in the court of Denmark has its effect on Hamlet as he gropes for a way out of his melancholy and ineffectuality. The verbal over-elaborateness, as Professor Southall notes, is a disease. But Hamlet is saved by his awareness of it. Hence his double-edged retort to Polonius's query about what he is reading: "Words, words, words." He holds himself guilty at one place of unpacking his heart with words like a whore. The sudden outburst of love and admiration for Horatio is similarly cut off by a shame-faced remark: "Something too much of this."

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[2] Arthur Koestler. *Dialogue With Death* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1943), p. 166.

For the greater part of the play we find Hamlet nearly torn in two by an inner strife. Hamlet's character is far from idealised, and we are made to notice something demonic in his nature.[3] He emerges out of prolonged philosophizing gloom, partly enforced by circumstances, into bursts of frenzied activity. As Horatio mildly remonstrates with him, both sides of his self suffer from excess. And his tribute to Horatio in whom "blood and judgment are so well commingled" is a heart-felt admission of his own weakness. There is a blind rage working within him. He turns with sudden and passionate violence against people who provoke him, whether inadvertently or not. The Queen, Ophelia, Polonius, Osric, all receive the blast of his fury.

Yet we find critics often ignoring the plain facts of his impossible situation. His mother's perfidy and lustfulness and his suspicions about the circumstances of his father's death are sufficient to explain his earlier melancholy. Once he is in possession of the secret of his father's death, he realises that he has become a marked man. The king is not deceived either by his brooding or by his antics, and keeps him under close watch. The Court does indeed become a prison, with his mother, his beloved, his school-friends, practically everybody appearing to be in league with the enemy. Surrounded by watchful spies, in possession of a deadly secret for the like of which the reward is still the assassin's dagger or bullet, Hamlet can scarcely be expected to behave normally. The anxiety about fulfilling his mission will add to his tensions and troubles. After all this, we do not need conjectures about a sick, paranoid imagination to understand Hamlet's behaviour. Yet this is often the conclusion of moralising scholars.[4] The "foul and pestilent" air in which the events of the play are steeped must surely be reckoned with when assessing Hamlet's reactions.

One of the portentous suggestions in the play, which to my mind are a source of its richness, is the question of man's role in the world. We discover with Hamlet that man's judgment and plans do not explain everything; the consequences of action often deviate from the intention. The cruel deaths in the play—Polonius's, Ophelia's, Hamlet's own — underline this lesson. What a lot of spying, plotting and contriving goes on in the play! Yet often the enginer is hoist with his own petard. Laertes admits on the verge of death:

> Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe. Osric;
> I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

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[3] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 290.

[4] E.g. L.C. Knights, "Prince Hamlet," *Explorations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 77.

The graveyard scene reiterates the futility of man's deepest plots. Yet, if this be so, the problem of man's role becomes more, not less, agonising. A certain humility in regard to purposes man can only half-understand, a certain readiness of the spirit to play the role is Hamlet's response to the problem. This appears to be the imaginative root of the numerous references to plays, acting, and the stage in Hamlet. A life committed to a purpose, whether political (as with Hamlet) or not, rises above the level of bare existence. It has to play a role, not in the pejorative sense of the term.

Yet there is no guarantee of personal fulfillment. His eventual death apart, his personal relationships are all bent or broken under the pressure of this role. He inflicts much cruelty and injury. But Shakespeare does not deny him the dignity of innocence. Macbeth is dismissed at the end as a "bloody tyrant." There was nothing to prevent Shakespeare from passing on Hamlet a similar judgment, as indeed Harold Goddard did.[5] But we have the unaffected warmth of Horatio's

> Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince
> And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

This should I believe modify our awareness of the cruelty and ruthlessness to which Hamlet becomes prone.

There are numerous other aspects of the play, which are by no means inventions of fertile minds, to which distinguished critics of *Hamlet* have drawn our attention. Professor Southall's attempt at a close reading of the poetry of the play does not make contact with any of them. One more reason why his critical effort must be considered misspent.

HIREN GOHAIN

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[5] Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), vol. II, pp. 35, 70.

Lo, Where It Comes Again

Shakespeare, like the Bible, has been charged with containing apparent contradictions. The most notorious one in *Hamlet*, so far as I can tell, is the Prince's reference to "The undiscover'd country from whose bourn / No traveller returns" (3.1.80)[1] after he seems to have seen such a visitor in the person of the Ghost. As a reviewer of a recent production in New York observed, this seeming discrepancy casts doubt upon whether the visitant is the bonafide spirit of Hamlet's father from purgatory, hell, or the grave. But of course the disparity may be merely in the Prince's mind, pointing up the fact that, as a student at Lutheran Wittenberg, Protestant Hamlet would not have believed in the reality of purgatory and would have also thought that if the apparition came from somewhere else, it could not have been the genuine spirit of his father. Still, my feeling is that most members of the audience, as well as most readers, would find something contradictory in Shakespeare's conception of the next world evident in this discrepancy, and the reviewer in the *New York Times* alluded to above, as well as colleagues teaching on the university level, have corroborated this position for me.

The question arises, therefore, why *Hamlet* critics so often write about the Ghost's genesis as if no problem really exists. For instance, Michael Cameron Andrews, in his recent retelling of the action,[2] does not hesitate to claim that "throughout the play, Shakespeare has used Christian eschatology to create a special aura of mystery and horror. . . . the Ghost endures fiery purgation in a prison house" (p. 98). Earlier he speaks of "the Purgatory from which this stage-ghost comes" (p. 84). In a previous article, he had raised certain questions, validly enough, concerning Eleanor Prosser's position that the Ghost was generally thought to be a devil,[3] a study to which I alluded,[4] but his own bias is also challengeable. Let me hasten to say that his words are chosen with care and that he may well be right; I come very close to agreeing with them. On the other hand, questions remain. *Does* the Ghost endure "fiery purgation in a prison house" because it says it does? If so. can we accept the sanctification of revenge just because it argues for it? Further, he chooses to invent a special purgatory, even as Harbage has,[5] by putting it in inverted commas, as it were, speaking of "the Purgatory" (as if a number existed) and implying that the rules on the stage somehow can preempt conventional mores in life.

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[1] Reference is to the third edition of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington (Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1980).

[2] "*Hamlet* and the Satisfactions of Revenge," *Hamlet Studies*, 3 (1981), 83-102. The article is, on the whole, excellent.

[3] "Professor Prosser and the Ghost," *RenP*, *1974* (1975), 19-27.

[4] "Subjectivity as an Occupational Hazard of 'Hamlet Ghost' Critics," *Hamlet Studies*, 1 (1979), 23-33.

Now I should confess, at this juncture, that I have been taken to task for confusing art with life. Indeed, the reviewer of the first issue of *Hamlet Studies* castigates me for "ignoring the point that the Ghost, like every other character, is part of a play, not a treatise."[6] Likewise, another recent critic writes, possibly thinking of me in part again, that "to argue on the basis of the homilies that Hamlet is simply an unchristian revenger is to confuse theatre with Sunday chapel, something the Elizabethans who attacked the godlessness of the stage never did."[7] This last sentiment is cleverly expressed, but it also gives little credit to the brighter members of the Renaissance audience. Granted, life and art are not co-extensive, but to treat the difference cavalierly is simplistic and anti-intellectual. As for my not considering the play from a theatrical standpoint, for the record I should state that I started out my career as a college play-director, that I have acted not only on the academic stage but in community theater and elsewhere (having performed in probably the first community theater production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*), and that I did graduate work in the theater. From my experience, therefore, I repudiate my critic and call his bluff. It is time that someone pointed out how frequently nowadays the charge is made that a given scholar is not seeing Shakespeare in theatrical terms, whereas, in reality, the critic is apt simply to assert unfairly that philosophic considerations and the like were over the heads of the spectators. Such a lack of respect for the intelligence and subtlety of members of the audience strikes me as mindless. One of the finest things about a play like *Hamlet* is that a spectator can go home and think about it afterwards, pondering the cerebral ramifications.

Back to Andrews's essay and the matter of "Purgatory." It might be added that by no means does my questioning of this concept imply a position in opposition to Christianity: I have heard similar skepticism from the lips of a priest. Moreover, to say that the audience would not care less, exactly where the Ghost hails from, is surely obtuse. Some ambiguity can be admitted, but to apotheosize it, as many modern critics have done, likewise is to be avoided, tending to emphasize the purely *theatrical* over the more deeply pondered *dramatic* qualities of the play.

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[5] *A Reader's Guide to William Shakespeare* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1963), pp. 32-33.

[6] Jay L. Halio, "A New *Hamlet* Journal," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31 (1980), 464. (Was there an old *Hamlet* journal?)

[7] William Rossky, "Hamlet as Jeremiah," *Hamlet Studies*, 1 (1979), 108.

I therefore would request that Professor Andrews come to terms with the issue of the contradiction cited at the start of this note. Glancing at the *Variorum* comments, I notice that a number of previous scholars have dealt with this "apparent oversight,"[8] but none have truly answered it satisfactorily. Does the Prince mean that no one returns from the dead *to stay*? Is he providing a transliteration of a line in Catullus ("Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum, / Illuc unde negant redire quenquam")? (No translation in English was then available.) Is he only showing his wavering mind? If so, why is the audience then bothered?

ROBERT F. FLEISSNER

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[8] *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Hamlet*, ed. H. H. Furness, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia; J. P. Lippincott, 1877), I, 213-14.

REVIEWS

A Review of Periodical Articles (1982-83)

There is only one substantial interpretative article to report at present, but, fortunately, it is one well worthy of such prominence. Moreover, it manages to be so despite ominously taking as its initial point of reference psychologists' jargon, rather than Shakespeare's play. The phrase, "double bind," is, it appears, a term used for a pattern of communication often found in families with a schizophrenic adolescent; a pattern in which an individual perceives the person with whom he or she has a relationship as expressing two orders of message, each of which contradicts the other. The result is that the individual is unable to discriminate between them, and cannot decide which message to respond to. Anna K. Nardo[1] proceeds to analyze the play in these terms. And to make matters worse, Hamlet is initially confronted, not with one but with two "double binds": Gertrude sends out sexual warning signals which tell her son that he must separate himself from her emotionally, and yet also pleads for him to stay in Elsinore; and the Ghost demands the impossible by seeking revenge for his murder and his wife's incest, while simultaneously wanting the revenger neither to allow his character to become depraved nor to punish Gertrude. The only way out of a "double bind," if the incongruous messages prove impossible to resolve, is to respond in turn with a double message. Nardo sees 'play' as providing Hamlet with this response, for 'play' is itself double, inhabiting both a real and a non-real world. The clearest example of this is the staged play which traps Claudius by being simultaneously fiction and the truth. But the pattern becomes increasingly complex, as Hamlet finds himself both trapping others (poor Ophelia, whose life is a whole series of "double binds" leading to her madness) and being himself trapped by the Ghost. Hamlet is not driven to madness because, ironically enough, Claudius's expulsion of him forces him into the escape he could not create for himself. When Hamlet returns, he finds that he is involved in a larger game than one of his devising: "Providence stages a larger play that binds Laertes, Claudius, and Gertrude to their sins." Allowing Providence to shape ends releases Hamlet from the "double bind" because it reveals how life itself is a "double bind": "God's commandments require man, in a world of deceptive appearances, to take moral responsibility for his actions, the results of which he cannot know; but God's omnipotence shapes those actions to His own inscrutable ends no matter what choices a person makes." Nardo's essay is perceptive, and her argument is well presented. The psychological term, for once, does provide a clarifying, rather than obfuscating, perspective on the play; and Nardo's development of the idea of doubleness does illuminate something which is at the very centre of *Hamlet* and Hamlet. Her overall pattern, though, does seem to be a little too neat, especially in her invocation of an all-involving "double bind" which providentially wraps things up. The result is, perhaps, somewhat too determinate a response to a play whose very indeterminacy (as Martin Scofield argues in *The Ghosts of Hamlet*) is its characteristic mark. Nardo's article is, nevertheless, a major contribution to *Hamlet* studies.

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[1] Anna K. Nardo, "Hamlet, 'A Man to Double Business Bound'," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1983), 181-99.

For the rest, there is a general air of chipping away at pieces of him. Indeed, Robert A. Fothergill's[2] piece is more a case of "Tush, tush, 'twill not appear." To be fair, he is actually pursuing the ploy of counterfeit death in a range of plays. His point about *Hamlet*, though, is that there Shakespeare passes up the opportunity for such a usage: Hamlet could have given Claudius the false security of believing him dead, and Shakespeare could have engineered a nicely dramatic return at Ophelia's funeral, but instead Hamlet announces his safe return in a letter. This is an instance of distancing himself from "the dramaturgy of manoeuvre and counter-manoeuvre that animates so many revenge plays." The difference between *Hamlet* and its contemporaries is assuredly a token of its excellence, and any point, however small, which supports this is valuable. More disturbing is Gregory des Jardins's[3] observation of what the play does not have. He notes that, although the speech Hamlet wishes to hear from the Player is that of Aeneas recounting Pyrrhus's slaughter of Priam, the image of the "Hyrcanian beast" with which he begins his own recitation actually comes from Dido's denunciation of Aeneas. This misquotation "points to the character of the speaker; at the only time Hamlet speaks in a voice other than his own, he speaks as Aeneas." But, where in Virgil Aeneas's speech proceeds with a description of his desire for revenge, which is diverted by the creative idea of founding the city anew elsewhere, Hamlet will go on with revenge at the cost of the destruction of the state: "annihilation of the city as a city is brought about by the virtue necessary to preserve the city through defence, but it is courage out of wisdom's control, which for this reason produces the reverse of founding." There is a good point somewhere in this; but des Jardins omits to pursue some implications, such as, for example, would derive from Hamlet using not Aeneas's voice, but Dido's. Not only does Hamlet not behave like Aeneas, but he rejects Dido's path to self-slaughter. Development of the idea is needed.

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[2] Robert A. Fothergill, "The Perfect Image of life: Counterfeit Death in the Plays of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 52, no. 2 (Winter, 1982/3), 155-78.

[3] Gregory des Jardins, "The Hyrcanian Beast," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 30, no. 2 (April, 1983), 124-5.

Sources inhabit a curious no-man's-land between existence and absence. J.J.M. Tobin[4] suggests that "salary" (in F's "hire and salary," 3.3.79) comes from Nashe's *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem* (1593). This work provides, says Tobin, a number of words and phrases for *Hamlet* which, like "salary," are unique in the Shakespearean canon. Further, the relevant Nashe phrase, "brothel houses of salary," comes from a passage attacking the hypocrisy of political condoning of prostitution, and could be seen as having point in the *Hamlet* context. Tobin, who has been indefatigably perusing the works of Nashe, has another article[5] arguing for Shakspeare's use of words from *Lenten Stuffe* (1599). Again, some of these, such as "shipwrights" (1.1.78) and "quietus" (3.1.75), are unique in the canon. The trouble with this kind of word-spotting is not only its tendency to arbitrariness (I expect Shakespeare could just possibly have come across the word "salary" without Nashe), but its production of pointless lists. Tobin certainly finds a lot of parallels, but does anything come of them? He suggests, for example, that Hamlet's "What a piece of work is man" speech, usually related to Montaigne, may owe something to Nashe's anecdote of the herring's canonization (the odour of herring rises like a "pestilent steame," the herring is "protected under the Popes canopy" and so on). This all seems quite splendidly unlikely, and Tobin's interpretation is really rather feeble: "the paradox of the sanctification of a smoked herring at the Vatican is not wholly out of keeping with the angelic / inglorious paradox which the Prince is stating." Well, not wholly, but it is perhaps considering too curiously to consider so. Tobin's "salary" suggestion is more convincing than any of his *Lenten Stuffe* echoes.

And some sources seem more absent than others. Manfred Draudt[6] argues that Hamlet's "If it be now, 'tis not to come" speech derives from Seneca's *Epistle 24*, "On Despising Death": "Let us think of everything that can happen as something which will happen" ("Quicquid fieri potest, quasi futurum cogitemus"). Hamlet's resigned acceptance of destiny is thus a dramatized version of Seneca's advice. But the echo is really not very close, and passages offering such, or similar, sentiments abound in classical and modern literature. When Michael Cameron Andrews[7] suggests Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (in MS. 1598, pub. 1601) as a source for Hamlet's lines about defect (in his speech on the Danes and heavy drinking), one's weary response of "well, possibly" is accompanied by a sense of how unnecessary it is to produce an obscure reference in support of a clear issue. Andrews's real observation is that Hamlet's speech has nothing to do with *hamartia*, whether tragic flaw or error: rather, Hamlet is talking about "defects which make others think less of us." Indeed so: it is a speech about appearance, reputation, judgement (drunkenness, incidentally, strikes one as being as feeble a candidate for tragic flaw as procrastination). Elizabeth Thompson Oakes,[8] though, must bear the palm for the most distant source. She claims that the killing of Polonius, whom Hamlet had earlier called a calf, re-enacts the central moment of "Killing the Calf" a presentation of strolling players in Shakespeare's lifetime which involved a performer behind a curtain acting, by ventriloquism, the parts of both butcher and animal. I call this "distant" in the sense that this fine-sounding drama seems to inhabit a world back in time from the highly sophisticated world that is Shakespeare's drama. And yet *Hamlet* does play off the sophisticated against the unsophisticated (in thought, in word, in drama), and so Oakes's idea may, paradoxically, be nearest by being furthest, if directions may be so allowed to be found out by indirections.

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[4] J.J.M. Tobin, "Hamlet and *Salary*," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 30, no. 2 (April, 1983), 125-6.

[5] J.J.M. Tobin, "*Hamlet* and Nashe's *Lenten Stuffe*," *Archiv*, 219. Band 134. Jahrgang 2. Halbjahresband 1982, 388-95.

[6] Manfred Draudt, "Another Senecan Echo in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1983), 216-7.

The classic case of an absent presence is the *Ur-Hamlet*. Naseeb Shaheen[9] argues that, when Comedy in the Induction to *A Warning for Fair Women* (a domestic drama of the 1590s) makes fun of tragedies which employ a ghost "Lapt in some fowle sheete" which cries "*Vindicta*, revenge, revenge," the reference is more likely to be to the *Ur-Hamlet* than to *The Spanish Tragedy*. His reasons are both negative (Hieronimo's words are not a call for revenge, and, in any case, he is not yet dead) and positive (Thomas Lodge's comment about the ghost in the *Ur-Hamlet* crying revenge is close to the *Warning for Fair Women* lines). This seems possible; but the one word, "revenge," is frail evidence, and we are in particularly murky territory when we get to the *Ur-Hamlet*. There are enough problems dealing with texts we do have. Gary Taylor[10] treads delicately and expertly through the minefield of the First Folio, to make what looks like a fair deduction about the Folio copy for *Hamlet*. From the discovery and development of apprentice compositor E by Charlton Hinman and T.H. Howard-Hill respectively emerges the relative conservatism of E in treating copy, as in his relatively low rate of alteration of punctuation. But the two pages of *Hamlet* which E is agreed to have set (pp. 5 and pp. 5^{v}) depart from this pattern: assuming Q2 to have been used as copy, the ratio of retention to variation is 2 to 3, as against ratios of between 3 to 1 and 6 to 1 in the pages of three plays where E is known to have set from printed copy. This evidence suggests that E was not using printed copy, especially as his treatment of punctuation in the pages he set immediately after *Hamlet* reveal his normal pattern. If E were not using printed copy, then there is no reason to suggest that any other compositor was. So the assumption that Q2 was copy for F in the case of *Hamlet* is put in doubt.

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[7] Michael Cameron Andrews, "The Stamp of One Defect," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1983), 217-8.

[8] Elizabeth Thompson Oakes, " 'Killing the Calf' in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1983), 215-6.

[9] Naseeb Shaheen, "*A Warning for Fair Women* and the *Ur-Hamlet*," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 30, no. 2 (April, 1983), 126-7.

Turing from compositors' problems to actors', we find a piquantly juxtaposed pair of articles about speaking verse. O.B. Hardison, Jr.[11] firmly states that action, not verse is the soul of drama. Performance of Shakespeare's blank verse must not allow recitation of iambic pentameter to dominate in such a way that melody tyrannizes over meaning: "The language in Shakespeare's mature drama is validated by its relation to action rather than to poetry." He illustrates this by approvingly citing the Olivier film of *Hamlet* where the words "Soft you now, / The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remember'd" are treated by Olivier to three extended pauses, during which Hamlet first discovers Ophelia, then walks to her, and finally notices her book. By this means, says Hardison, what can be just a bland transition is transformed into "a powerfully-charged expression of themes that are the center of the play." But George T. Wright,[12] whom this review has once before observed in creative consideration of technical detail, starts from the other end of the matter. Tudor poetry tended to treat the iambic pentameter as two phrases, of four and six syllables, so that the metre of the line dominated the phrase. With Shakespeare, however, "the phrase becomes liberated from the severe stewardship of an autocratic meter," flexibility (such as the shifting of the pause in the line) is introduced, and the result is that sentence and line achieve something like comparable importance in the plays of the *Hamlet* period. Although they start from opposed points, the historian of metre and the champion of dramatic action in fact move in a similar direction, towards the notion of liberating the constraints of rigid versification. Yet there is still a crucial distinction between the two approaches: for Wright, flexibility means a play between metre and meaning, whereas Hardison seems to regard metre as an irrelevant nuisance, to be dispensed with by the creative actor. This is, of course, to put the issue in extreme terms; and Hardison chooses his ground well when he instances a transition from soliloquy to conversation. But, even there, is not our perception of that transition created by the sense of a loosening of strict pattern within a continuing fundamental metrical pattern? Tension (and we are moving into a particularly tense scene between Hamlet and Ophelia) is in the verse: break it up completely, and the tension goes.

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[10] Gary Taylor, "The Folio Copy for *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, no. 1 (Spring, 1983), 44-61.

[11] O.B. Hardison, Jr., "Speaking the Speech," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1983), 133-46.

[12] George T. Wright, "The Play of Phrase and Line in Shakespeare's Iambic Pentameter," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1983), 147-58.

This is not, of course, to discount the importance of action, but, in *Hamlet* of all plays, action is not simple, and the pattern of language is a vital supplier of complexity. Charles A. Hallett[13] has an interesting article exploring how dramatic action is itself patterned. "Beat" is his name for a unit of action (not identical with a "scene") which contains a single subject, a dominant emotion. Dramatic movement can be viewed as a succession of "beats." One of his examples is *Hamlet* 4.7, where Claudius makes of Laertes an instrument for killing Hamlet in four "beats," involving such dominant motifs as Claudius's intimidation of Laertes, and the presenting of the plot itself. It is the thought-processes of the ruling character (here Claudius) which determine the structure of these movements, and the nature of them can reflect that character (here Claudius's deviousness). Further, the individual "beat" fits in with an overall structure, in this case that of reversal, as Laertes is converted from enemy to ally. This is certainly a helpful contribution to our sense of dramatic action; but I wonder if the result is not some degree of over simplification? The idea that, in any one "beat," there is a single thing going on seems to have as its danger the denial of that simultaneous presence of different things that is the spring of tension in this most tensely complex of plays.

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[13] Charles A. Hallett, "Analyzing Action in Shakespeare's Plays: The Beat," *Papers on Language and Literature*, 19, no. 2 (Spring, 1983), 124-44.

There are three articles of relevance to those interested in *Hamlet* and the arts. Norman Gillespie[14] hunts missing music by Henry Carey to a 1736 performance. The *New Grove Dictionary* has the music as lost, but wrongly lists it as instrumental, when it actually sets words by "Henry Savile." Gillespie points out that Gifford, the theatre manager, had put on a reconstruction of the lying-in-state of the Duke of Buckingham earlier that year, and that Carey had provided music for that. The music for *Hamlet* was for an additional, money-making, scene of "The Ceremony of Hamlet's Lying-in-State." So the music for the two events could have been the same. This is an interestingly investigative piece; but Karen Newman's [15] discussion of another missing link, the figure of Hamlet in Francis Hayman's painting of the play-scene for the Prince of Wales's Pavilion at Vauxhall Gardens, sheds light on the play as well as being inherently fascinating. Hayman's drawing of the play-scene for Hanmer's illustrated Shakespeare of 1744 established the central conventions for depictions of that scene: the "Murder of Gonzago" is back-stage, framed by two foreground groups (Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius; and Hamlet, Horatio, Ophelia), thereby enforcing the play-within-a-play idea. The painting, however, omits Hamlet and Horatio, has the play forward, while attention is concentrated on the figure of Claudius starting from his throne. The omission of the principal members of the audience, suggests Newman, puts us into the role of watchers of both the play and Claudius. We share Hamlet's point of view, and thus become active participators. This neatly shows how one artist can creatively feed off another, and how the result can be a new art-work which is also a fine criticism of the original.

Finally, Bernice W. Kliman[16] takes us back to the Olivier film. She examines the preproduction script for the film, finding both similarities and differences when compared with the finished product. Some telling details she finds to be already in the script (such as the pulses of the camera in and out of focus which accent the heartbeats as the ghost arrives), while some of the fussier filmic devices are eliminated. The really interesting details, however, are the additions made to the script. These serve to emphasize a process of smoothing-out: while the script had already joined some narrative strands together, the film further clarifies the plot and rams home connections between characters (as by overlapping images of the Queen's bed and Claudius drinking). The script included just one Fortinbras scene (4.4), while the film cuts even this out. Kliman finds in all this evidence of "the dynamism of the translation process": I see it as evidence of a process of reductive simplification. The eighteenth-century painting alertly responds to the play; while the twentieth-century film reduces the impact of its verse and the complexity of its structure. There must be a moral there somewhere.

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[14] Norman Gillespie, "Henry Carey's 'Missing' Music to *Hamlet* 1736," *Theatre Notebook*, 37, No. 3 (1983), 124-7.

[15] Karen Newman, "Hayman's Missing *Hamlet*, "*Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, no. 1 (Spring, 1983), 73-8.

[16] Bernice W. Kliman, "A Palimpsest for Olivier's *Hamlet*, "*Comparative Drama*, 17, no. 3 (Fall, 1983), 243-53.

W. HUTCHINGS

Hamlet. The Arden Shakespeare. Edited by Harold Jenkins. London and New York: Methuen, 1982. Pp. xvii+574. $30.00 HB; $8.95 PB.

The editor who ventures into the critical and textual labyrinth that is *Hamlet* plucks a thousand dangers on his head. The play is not only the most discussed of Shakespeare's dramas but also one of the most problematic textually; hence any modern editor must confront the unhappy task of culling critical chaff from wheat while grappling with a heavy share of textual cruces. Harold Jenkins brings to these problems a formidable knowledge of commentary and play, and has produced an edition for which Shakespeareans will be extremely grateful and one that will perhaps engender more than the usual share of scholarly debate.

By far the largest portion of Jenkins's book-length introduction is occupied by matters textual or editorial. He endorses the now widely-held view that Q_1 is a later version of the play than those of Q_2 or F, thus reaffirming its status as a corrupt memorial abridgment that derives from performance with no direct manuscript link to Shakespeare's original. The brevity of Q_1 (it is only slightly more than half the length of Q_2) points to a "reported" text which apparently derived from the already shortened version represented in F. In a full and detailed discussion of the memorial characteristics of Q_1, Jenkins takes up such matters as method and type of word replacement, instances of recollection and anticipation, transposition of dialogue, changes in the sequence of episodes, and the like. Following Duthie, he maintains that passages in Q_1 not parallel to the Shakespearean text do not derive from the *Ur-Hamlet* (as previously believed) but are instead the result of imperfect reporting, and adduces the shortened version of the gravedigger's song in Q_1 as evidence. The erroneous position of the so-called "nunnery" scene also evidences the reporter's lapse of memory rather than deliberate alteration. Jenkins quite properly, however, does not make light of the deliberate changes in Q_1; he links these with the text's usefulness in matters of staging and even with its rare serviceability as a guide to readings that the Q_2 and F texts have lost.

The allusive discussion of Q_2 argues with admirable lucidity the pretty-much-canonical position that this text derives from Shakespeare's "foul papers" rather than from "fair copy"; and Jenkins, adhering to modern editorial practice, makes Q_2 the basis for his edition. Most impressive is the accurate and evidential nature of Jenkins's treatment of such treacherous matters as handwriting analysis (Q_2 is linked with the Shakespearean pages of *Sir Thomas More*), playhouse marking of the manuscript and its implications, omissions, compositor analysis, the use of Q_1 in the printing of Q_2, and press correction. After a thorough examination of the problematic textual features of Q_2, Jenkins attempts to account for their origin in the printing house. Acknowledging his debt to the "corrected" Q_1 theory of Walker and the "conflated text" approach of Bowers, he suggests that the experiment of annotating Q_1 and using the text for copy "was actually tried out" (p. 50) and proved feasible for the first scene. After this it was abandoned, at least temporarily, although it could possibly have been used for parts of scenes 4 and 5. But even when Q_1 was not relied upon for copy it was still available for compositorial "consultation," a possibility that somewhat diminishes Q_2's authority for the first act. Although Q_1 was relied upon very little after Act 1, it was still "liable to be resorted to" (p. 52) at other times by both compositors. The disturbing upshot of all this, as Jenkins notes, is that since Q_2 is liable to be indebted to Q_1 at any point, the two texts can never corroborate each other; thus Q_2 is less authoritative when it agrees with Q_1 than when it differs from it.

The long section on the three texts of *Hamlet* concludes impressively with an important investigation of F. After duly noting that behind F there lies a manuscript other than that from which Q_2 was printed, Jenkins takes up in order F's additions and omissions, stage directions, variants in dialogue, and actors' alterations. He suggests interestingly that although F is probably a theatrical abridgment, it still contains "more than can be supposed to have been regularly played at the Globe" (p. 56). Its stage directions, moreover, are descriptive, thus pointing to a scribe or editor and further suggesting a text for *reading* as well as for performance. Jenkins posits that what we have here is "not so much a promptbook as a preliminary revision of the manuscript upon which a promptbook might be based" (p. 59), that is, a text adapted for the theatre but with "some options still left open" (p. 59). He hypothesizes that F depends, though not necessarily directly, upon a copy of Q_2 collated with a manuscript and emended to conform to it, and further that "between the annotation of Q_2 and the printing of F a transcript intervened" (p. 73). The gestation of F, as Jenkins reconstructs it, would thus have occurred in the following stages: (1) a copy of Q_2 annotated from a manuscript; (2) a transcript of this text; and (3) the F text as we have it. The merit of this scheme (although Jenkins acknowledges possible objections to it) is that it affords an explanation for those errors in F that indicate a misreading of handwriting and also accounts for the strangely consistent changes in the forms of characters' names.

In addition to the lengthy section of his introduction devoted to textual concerns, Jenkins's most obvious departure from the practice of previous Arden editors is his omission of an appendix reprinting sources. This is, of course, less of an inconvenience in the post-Bullough period, but we nevertheless miss the easy access to sources that most of the Arden editions provide. In place of the source appendix, however, Jenkins prints at the end of the text one-hundred and fifty pages of eclectic "Longer Notes" (supplementing and often expanding upon the usual commentary at the foot of the page) that occasionally evolve into small essays in their own right. Some will object to the cumbersomeness of this procedure, but the rewards here are considerable. It is in this section that Jenkins's erudition and sound judgment find eloquent expression. For example, in the one-page explanation of the Ghost's "duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed / That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf" (1.5.32-33), historical background, literary analogue, textual scholarship, explication, and good sense come beautifully together to support the Q_1 and Q_2 "roots" rather than F's "rots"— and the tissue of allusion here helps both to fix the reading and to open literary vistas within and without the text. Similar effects are achieved by the more extensive notes to the "fishmonger' episode, the Player's speech, the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, and' Ophelia's songs, each of which refreshes these familiar passages with fine new critical perspectives.

One of the most striking features of this edition is the number of new or rarely accepted readings Jenkins adopts. His editorial eclecticism is perhaps best illustrated by the frequency with which he departs from his copy text to choose an historically less popular reading from F. The most interesting example of this phenomenon is his choice of "o'er-offices" over the traditional "o'er-reaches" in Hamlet's remarks during the graveyard scene (5.1.78), an editorial decision admirably defended in the introduction on both textual and critical grounds (pp. 59-60). Other examples of an F reading supplanting its more familiar Q_2 counterpart (F reading first) are: inurn'd-interr'd (1.4.49); hebenon-hebona (1.5.62); *these-thus* (2.2.112); dispriz'd-despiz'd (3.1.72); crimeful-criminal (4.7.7); and wiseness-wisdom (5.1.256). Jenkins's editorial independence is evident in other ways too. For instance, in the familiar line "What's Hecuba to him, or he to [Hecuba]" (2.2.553), he endorses the minority view, resisting F's second "Hecuba," and following instead the more "crisp and forceful" reading "her" in Q_2. Also, at 4.5.152 he attributes the line "Let her come in" to the King rather than to "voices" or a "noise within" as is the practice with virtually all modern editors. On the more familiar textual battlegrounds Jenkins opts for "sullied" over the now melting "solid" (1.2.129), "What piece" over "What a piece" (2.2.303), and "silence" over Hanmer's less popular "sconce" (3.4.4). A note of retrenchment is sounded in Jenkins's Longer Note on the crux "sledded Polacks" (1.1.66); here the editor reaffirms the traditional meaning "inhabitants of Poland riding in sleds" rather than the more fashionable explanation that what is intended is a military weapon of some sort—i.e., "poleaxe." Some revered bits of stage tradition, however, are lopped off. It may be true that Polonius's "mobled queen is good" represents "a characteristic piece of ad-libbing" by the actors who tampered with F, but we miss the remark no less on that account. It would perhaps have been a kinder cut to adopt *The Riverside Shakespeare's* brackets rather than to omit the phrase entirely. Other familiar interpolations in F that disappear in Jenkins's text are Hamlet's "O vengeance" (2.2.577), "hide Fox, and all after" (4.2.29), and Laertes's "A touch, a touch" (5.2.289).

In a rather full section on the date Jenkins takes up the famous allusion to the "little eyases" that seems to place *Hamlet* firmly in 1601, and the apparently conflicting mention of the play in Gabriel Harvey's copy of Chaucer's works (1598) in which Harvey alludes to Essex in the present tense—a reference that very likely points to a date before the Earl's execution on 25 February 1601. (Harvey's manuscript note comprises the lone appendix to the edition). Jenkins is inclined to believe that *Hamlet* reached the stage perhaps by 1599 but certainly in the course of 1600 *without* the topicalities about the actors and that these were appended to it the next year. He also compares the play extensively with Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, citing numerous parallels between the works in plot, language, and idea, and concluding that *Hamlet* slightly precedes Marston's play. By far Jenkins's most compelling evidence for this assumption is his belief that "features common to the two plays have a significance in *Hamlet* which in *Antonio's Revenge* they have lost" (p. 9). But why must Marston's artistic inferiority, amply evidenced here, necessarily imply indebtedness? We need only recall the relationship of *The Famous Victories of Henry V* to Shakespeare's *Henriad* to see how easily this argument can be turned on its head. Jenkins is surely on much firmer ground when he cites the available facts pointing to an autumn-winter date of 1599-1600 for *Antonio and Mellidea* and notes that the description of winter in the prologue to its sequel likely suggests a winter date of 1600-1601 for *Antonio's Revenge*.

The treatment of sources is a model of learning and concision, though some readers will also want to consult Bullough's rather more extensive list of possibilities. Jenkins provides thorough examinations of all the major sources of the play, often commenting interestingly on the complex relationships among them. We learn, for instance, that although the Hamlet story in Saxo is often tonally akin to Shakespeare's and anticipates many of its characters and incidents, it is in Belleforest that such important details as the brother-husband antithesis and the adultery of Hamlet's mother first emerge. A brief but pithy discussion of the relationship among the *Ur-Hamlet, The Spanish Tragedy*. and Shakespeare's play concludes that the many analogies between *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Hamlet* suggest a common source in the *Ur-Hamlet*; and although Jenkins's argument here is of necessity highly conjectural, its judiciousness and sound critical sense prove persuasive. The annoying problem presented by the German play *Der Bestrafte Brudermord* also receives much attention; here Jenkins argues persuasively that any connection between this text and the lost *Ur-Hamlet* is only an appealing fiction. Instead he points out that the German drama presents only a degenerate version of Shakespeare's play, perhaps descending from an acting text taken to Germany by English players.

The introduction concludes with a somewhat shorter critical essay than we should perhaps expect, particularly given the length of the textual remarks; but it should hurriedly be mentioned that a good many of Jenkins's most astute critical observations are sprinkled liberally throughout the Longer Notes. The critical remarks in the introduction, however, are surprisingly conservative. In a brief opening section on "Problems," Jenkins warns us not to be overly concerned with such matters as Horatio's status in Elsinore as visitor or denizen, Fortinbras's depiction as a hot-headed youth or dignified prince, and Hamlet's precise age. He is quite right in maintaining that these and similar concerns are "less 'problems' to be solved than local discrepancies which have to be accepted" (p. 123); but why raise such issues at all in an Arden edition? There are times when we sense something of an imbalance between the enviable sophistication of the earlier parts of the introduction and the rather uninspiring nature of some of Jenkins's critical remarks. This problem is no doubt attributable in large part to a laudable desire to cover the well-worn critical territory (and one could even argue that such is the purpose of a general introduction), but more than once we feel frighted with false fire. Jenkins, for example, is extremely wary of what Waldock termed the "documentary fallacy," that is, treating a work of fiction (in Bradleyan fashion) as though it were real life; and this concern prompts him to be skeptical of "psychological" approaches to the play:

> The desire to explain what the play does not by supplying the characters with motives and reactions on the model of our own is part of that demand for psychological realism which has dominated dramatic criticism since the eighteenth century, encouraged by the rise of the novel, which can trace the inner workings of its characters' minds to a degree that a play, presenting its persons through speech and action, cannot. (p. 124)

One can hardly disagree with this view. The only problem, however, is that it leads Jenkins to accept some fairly complicated utterances largely at face value. For instance, he takes very seriously Hamlet's analogy of the brother kings to Hyperion and satyr, noting that this early comparison suggests the dualities in man upon which Hamlet will repeatedly reflect. This, of course, is indisputable. But Jenkins continues with the observation that after the murder of old Hamlet the "bad man" controls the kingdom and its queen and the "god in man" has succumbed to the beast. Thus Hamlet's task is not simply to avenge his father's death but also "to rid the world of the satyr and restore it to Hyperion" (p. 131). What Jenkins ignores here—and what perhaps a touch of "psychological" criticism might suggest—is that the analogy on which this moral scheme is built is Hamlet's and not necessarily Shakespeare's. To be sure, this fact does not diminish in any way the thematic centrality of the Hyperion-satyr contrast (as Jenkins later so admirably demonstrates), but it does embroider this contrast with precisely the "psychological" richness necessary to complicate our response to the mercurial and hyperbolic figure who so avidly endorses it.

One of Jenkins's major concerns in his essay is to emphasize the structural coherence of the play, and this preoccupation leads him through both familiar and novel critical ground. Few readers will be surprised by the observation that Fortinbras and Laertes are foils for Hamlet or by the treatment of the eternal question of Hamlet's delay; many, however, may react quite differently to the discussion of the "dual" role of the revenger and its relationship with the Ghost. Jenkins's sharp contention that Laertes's revenge initiates "a second revenge action in which the first revenger appears at the other end" (p. 144) has wide structural and thematic implications, for it hints both at the recurring idea of man's dual nature and Hamlet's dual role as agent and victim of revenge. Jenkins contends further that this duality "is the essential foundation on which the play is built" (note, p. 144) and revealingly probes its connections to the Pyrrhus speech and to the character of Lucianus in the play-within-the play. Indeed, many of Hamlet's puzzling questions stem from the duality of his role—he is a part of what he loathes—and his sense of identification with a diseased stock contributes to his death wish (*not* desire for suicide) and to his dilemma whether to accept or reject the human lot. As regards the Ghost, Jenkins maintains that it speaks with the force of nature, itself both good and bad, heavenly and hellish, and that these dualities further reinforce the idea that the play depicts the "intermingling of good and evil in all life," a world in which "Hyperion and the satyr are brothers" (p. 157).

As noted at the beginning of this review, the editing of *Hamlet* is an enormously problematical task; and the minor objections that any reader may voice to Jenkins's edition can scarcely detract from what can only be regarded as a major scholarly achievement. Not only has Jenkins provided us with a meticulously edited and accurate text (frequent spot checks against the Hinman Folio facsimile and the recent Muir-Allen facsimile of the quartos could uncover only two small misprints, the omission of the speech prefix "King" [p. 366, line 40] and the incorrect "If" for "It" [p. 378, line 46]), he has also set a standard of learning and good taste for future editors to follow. We may at times regret Jenkins's critical inflexibility or his tendency to rely a bit more heavily on critics of an earlier generation than those of recent vintage, but on most important critical issues and for virtually every other aspect of the play he is likely to be our guide for many years to come. For this relief, we all owe him much thanks.

JOSEPH CANDIDO

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